



PS3
PlayStation 3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation 2

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PlayStation®

Official Magazine - Australia

ISSUE 52 FEBRUARY 2011
100% Australian Content

KILLZONE 3

Co-op revealed! The shooter of the year keeps getting better!

KRATOS KAMEO ►

IMMORTAL KOMBAT

God of War vs the warriors of gore in Mortal Kombat!

L.A. Noire

Why Rockstar's next-big-thing will put Australia on the map!

AUSSIE EXCLUSIVE!

UNCHARTED 3

FIRST LOOK: THE BIGGEST GAME OF 2011 REVEALED!

PLUS

DIRT 3
OPERATION
FLASHPOINT 2
BIOSHOCK
INFINITE
FIGHT NIGHT
CHAMPION
TOMB RAIDER
MASS EFFECT 3
AND MORE!

GRAN TURISMO 5

The definitive verdict you've been waiting (and waiting) for!

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW! ►

"GT5 is not delivering what it feels to drive a race car"

Need for Speed vs. GT

— SHIFT just got real!

HUGE HANDS-ON! ►

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED 2

Redefining multiplayer racing



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THE SCIENCE OF HATE: HOW METACRITIC BRINGS OUT THE WORST IN GAMERS


3, 3 2 3, 8 4 7

GAMES AND COUNTING



Rio Carnival Dance-Off 
created by Wexfordian



Penguin Turf War 
created by rtm224



BREAKING NEWS

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OUT NOW



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“We pushed the PS3 pretty hard last game, and will continue to do so with this one as well” ”

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Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception 54

Nathan Drake's back in his grittiest adventure yet, as he searches the desert for an ancient lost city. We talk to his creators, Naughty Dog, for all the latest on the loveable rogue.



60 Mortal Kombat

Kratos returns to your PlayStation 3 in *Mortal Kombat*, as the legendary series launches itself back into the gaming world. It's going to get messy.



64 The Science of Hate

A review is just someone's opinion, but how come some people just take it so personally? And why do they love to shout the critics down? We have the answers.

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EA's racer is set to take on the big wheels of racing!

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The *Mortal Kombat* crew welcome a new fighter: Kratos!

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72 Gran Turismo 5

It's here, ready to be lapped up by revheads everywhere. But does the legendary series take the chequered flag or stall at the start line? Race on to find out.



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The online low-down on Criterion's latest racer.



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The sequels you never expected for the games oft and best forgot

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A great debate will rage here every month

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A month and a bit of essential activities and releases

Release Schedule

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James 'discovers' how Wikileaks affects gaming

Opinion: Andy Astruc

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A reason why the greatest gun should be banned from shooters

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You call this Archaeology?

Back for his third adventure, Nathan Drake again teams up with Sully – this time to raid far off deserts.

The God of Gore

Kratos versus Sub-Zero? It's happening: the Spartan warrior invades *Mortal Kombat*.

The Science of Hate

People love to argue and claim we're all wrong. We find out why.

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Meet the team

**Paul Taylor**
Deputy Editor

By the time you read this I'll be fresh back from skiing. Assume I'm bruised and battered, but smiling.

Playing: *Pac-Man CE DX*
Wanting: *Deus Ex: HR*

**Stephanie Goh**
Art Director

Many thanks to the mystery benefactor that sent the hamper to the office. The cashews were lush.

Playing: *NBA Jam*
Wanting: *Uncharted 3*

**Adam Mathew**
Associate Editor

I must stop writing these on deadline. I have no words left in me to give. The world tastes like burning right now.

Playing: *GT5*
Wanting: *L.A. Noire*

**James Cottee**
Contributor

I'm not sure what I've been up to. I've completely forgotten December. I think I drank beer.

Playing: *CoD: Black Ops*
Wanting: *Monster Hunter*

**James Ellis**
Contributor

Recovery with a batch of face-loving cucumber slices. 2010 kicked a second crack in my rear. Serenity now!

Playing: *GT5*
Wanting: *Deus Ex: HR*

**Nathan Lawrence**
Contributor

Re-re-discovering the digital destructible delights of the online foray otherwise known as *BBC2*. Explode.

Playing: *AC: Brotherhood*
Wanting: *Arkham City*

**Dave Kozicki**
Contributor

I've been making n00bs flambe in *BFBC2 Vietnam*. No scopes, no P.O.W.s, no mercy! Medium rare, sir?

Playing: *BFBC2: Vietnam*
Wanting: *SSX: DD*

**Toby McCasker**
Contributor

I've been playing *Black Ops* so much when I walk into a room, I check the corners and make like I'm about to plant a claymore.

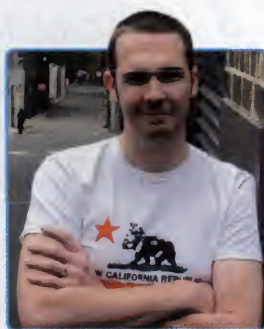
Playing: *CoD: Black Ops*
Wanting: *Asura's Wrath*

**Angry Sackboy**
Contributor

The stuffed one played *GT5* and said "I've seen 16-bit cheese graters throw sexier shadows". Ouch.

Playing: *GT5*
Wanting: *Restitution*

Editorial



So EA Games label president Frank Gibeau has said games without online components are "finished" as "online is where the innovation, and the action, is at".

I can see where he's coming from. Almost all of the most consistently popular games do feature an online multiplayer component. *GTAIV*, *Uncharted 2*, *Red Dead Redemption* and many others can and will remain alive online long after their story modes have

been conquered. There's a significant commercial argument right there.

To be fair to Gibeau, he didn't single out multiplayer (he does specify online components could also be co-op or some kind of other online functionality) but developers do seem to be scrambling to cram multiplayer modes into their games at an ever-increasing rate. The problem is that eventually it's going to come at the cost of poorer single-player modes.

Hell, it's already happening. Small studios that can't hope to compete with the likes of big guns like *Call of Duty* are compromising games by wasting their time on unnecessary multiplayer. I wonder, for instance, how much less awful Rebellion's *Rogue Warrior* could've been if they didn't feel obligated to fritter away time and resources on a multiplayer mode no one needed. That's not an exaggeration. When I reviewed that game I was literally the only human on Earth trying to play the multiplayer.

BioWare is shoving multiplayer into *Mass Effect 3*, a series acclaimed for its pitch-perfect single-player space operas. I'd prefer BioWare spent more time creating interesting and amazing quests for the single-player campaign. Perhaps I'm being unfair, assuming that *Mass Effect 3*'s multiplayer will mainly be an obligatory smattering of deathmatches. Still, what's wrong with an exclusively single-player experience?

People read books alone. Why can't we play games alone?

A great many gamers will proudly announce that they bought *Call of Duty: Black Ops* for the multiplayer alone, and that they'll never touch the single-player. What? Why not?

The moment we all simply start buying games for the multiplayer mode alone is the moment we turn videogames from an entertainment medium into a sport. There's nothing wrong with competitive gaming but buying videogames that have stories to tell and exclusively playing the multiplayer is like buying movies just to sling the DVDs around like ninja stars.

Wasteful.

Luke Reilly
Editor

Playing: *Gran Turismo 5*
Wanting: *L.A. Noire*

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Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:



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Question: what is the gift that keeps on giving the whole year round? Low? Wrong. A scratch-and-sniff calendar of celebrity croches? No. Please stop abusing our rhetorical system.

The answer we were looking for is: an *OPS* subscription! Think about it: every issue – cheaper – delivered to your door via magic.

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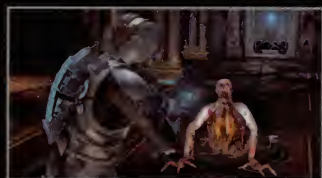
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“The Australian Christian Lobby has responded with glee”

Democracy Inaction

Australia: We're still cool with letting kids play *Grand Theft Auto*

A decision to introduce an R18+ classification for video games has been postponed following a Standing Committee of Attorneys General (SCAG) meeting in Canberra.

“It's disappointing that an adult rating for video games will be delayed once again despite mass support from the Australian community, whether it is from adult gamers who want the right to play games that appeal to them or parents who want clear guidelines for their children,” says Ron Curry, CEO of the iGEA.

“We are however pleased that the industry has been given the opportunity to put forward its arguments for an adult rating and encouraged by the tremendous support the issue has received from the Federal Government, and the active engagement by each Attorney General at today's meeting on the issue.”

The SCAG meeting followed several announcements made by Minister of Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor highlighting the

Gillard Government's support for an R18+ classification for video games.

O'Connor wrote on *The Punch* days before the meeting, “The jury is in, as far as the public is concerned, and I believe there is very strong public support for the introduction of the new adult classification for video games.”

The Interactive Australia 09 report by Bond University found that 91 per cent of gamers and non-gamers believe the classification should be introduced and that 91 per cent of adults would clearly know that game classified R18+ would be unsuitable for children.

“Whilst there is not an agreement upon introducing R18+ classification for video games today, there is a view that we should draft guidelines,” said O'Connor.

“Those guidelines should have regard to the difference between film and videogames. Those guidelines should also contemplate, for example, the possibility of redefining MA15+ if there was to be the introduction of an R18+ classification.”

South Australian Attorney-General John

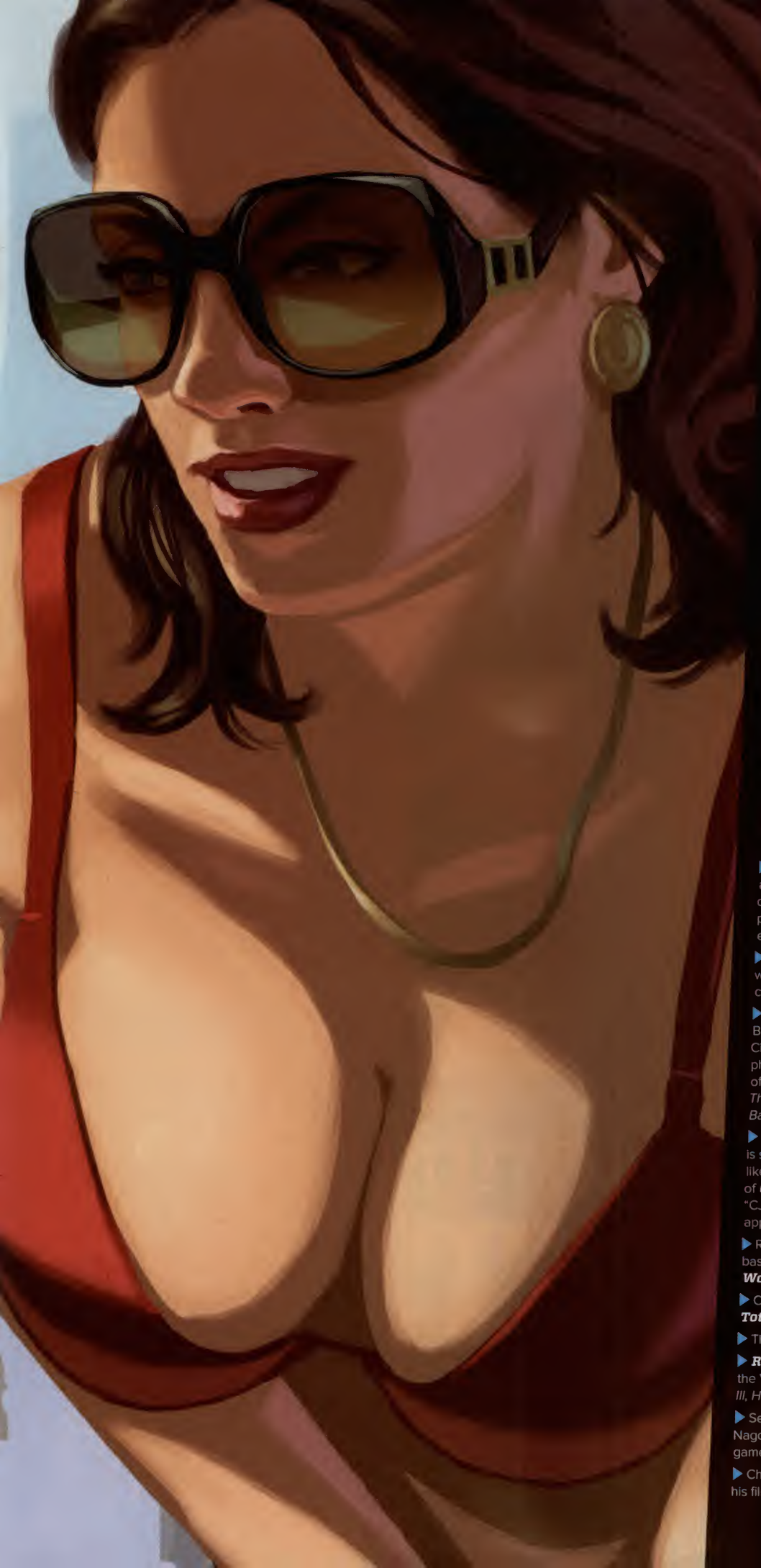
Rau confirmed that he raised the proposal of introducing an R18+ rating but scrapping MA15+ rating entirely, leaving games to be rated M or R18+. Rau said the new regime would grant parents greater certainty that non-R18+ games were appropriate for children.

The Australian Christian Lobby has responded with glee at the delay, surprisingly ecstatic children will remain able to play videogames that are rated adults-only overseas but only MA15+ in Australia.

“It was very clear to me that the great majority of AGs were in a state of bemusement that anyone could want to make or play many of these games and particularly those proposed for an R18+ rating,” said managing director Jim Wallace.

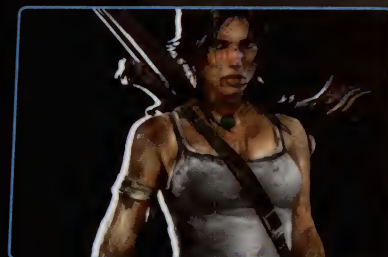
The next SCAG meeting takes place in March this year.

“We're hopeful that the weight of evidence and the comprehensive research into the matter will ensure an adult rating is introduced when the Attorney-Generals reconvene,” said Curry.



In Short

A brief look at this month's news



► The first details regarding the **Tomb Raider** reboot from Square Enix have emerged. It's a complete reset for the entire Tomb Raider brand, featuring a young, 21-year-old Lara stranded on an island after a shipwreck. We will see young Lara endure both physical and emotional trauma while trying to survive the horrors of this island.

► EA has confirmed that **Mass Effect 3** will launch on PS3 at the end of the year, meaning both *Mass Effect 2* and *Mass Effect 3* will both hit PS3 in 2011. *Mass Effect 3*, the so-called final chapter in the saga, will see Shepard saving Earth from the Reaper Invasion. It will include multiplayer.

► Bethesda has announced **The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**. A direct sequel to *Oblivion*, *Skyrim* will launch in November this year. It's running on a brand new engine.

► **Resistance 3** is reportedly already playable from start to finish, a full eight months ahead of its scheduled release.

► Hugo Strange is set to appear as a villain in **Batman: Arkham City**.

► EA has announced **SSX: Deadly Descents**.

► Guillermo del Toro (*Hellboy*, *Pan's Labyrinth*) is working on a trilogy of games with THQ called **inSANE**. It's being developed by Volition, however it's not due to land until 2013.

► **Prototype 2** has been announced. The game, again developed by Radical, sees a new main character, Sgt. James Heller, attempt to destroy the previous main character, Alex Mercer, following the events of the first game.

► That **Highlander** game announced by Eidos way back in 2007 that everyone thought was cancelled... has been officially cancelled.

► Former **Bodycount** creative director Stuart Black says the WWII shooter he's working on at City Interactive is currently in the "narrative framing" phase. He says the team hopes to "invoke the spirit of films like *The Dirty Dozen*, *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Guns of Navarone*, and a bit of *Inglourious Basterds*."

► Cypress Hill singer Michael "Shaggy" Washington is suing Rockstar over claims the company used his likeness without permission for the lead character of **Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas**, Carl "CJ" Johnson. Dude doesn't play a lot of games, apparently.

► Raven is rumoured to be working on a stealth-based James Bond title, shelving a follow-up to **Wolverine** in the process.

► Creative Assembly is considering bringing the **Total War** series to consoles.

► There will be a sequel to **EA Sports MMA**.

► **Red Dead Redemption** won Game of the Year at the VGA, beating *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, *God of War III*, *Halo: Reach* and *Mass Effect 2* for the title.

► Sega has announced that *Yakuza* creator Toshihiro Nagoshi's next game will be a squad-based action game set in Tokyo circa 2080 called **Binary Domain**.

► Christopher Nolan has confirmed a game based on his film **Inception** is in development.



► INTERVIEW

Talking SHIFT

SHIFT 2 Unleashed is getting set to swap paint with the big daddy of driving games, *GT5*. We got in touch with **Marcus Nilsson**, executive producer at Slightly Mad Studios, about the studio's plans to own the track

OPS: What's the significance of the "Unleashed" moniker?

MN: *SHIFT 2 Unleashed* is about the player unleashing the power and emotion of racing cars at 180 miles per hour. We know that racing is an emotional and physical experience and the driver's battle is meant to reflect the intense visceral experience that a player feels as they fight for position, dominate opponents and annihilate track times.

OPS: What's the first change or addition you made; the feature the team desperately wanted to be in *SHIFT* but had to wait until the sequel to get in?

MN: Night racing, without a doubt night racing! No game has ever done it in a really compelling way and we knew we could. It hasn't been easy; we had to create a whole new rendering engine to have the number of light sources we needed to create a really authentic experience. Night racing is a whole different ball game. When you only have your headlights to guide you drive differently. The track you thought you knew from day racing is suddenly reduced to darkness and senses need to be on high alert. You feel alone.

"GT5 is not delivering what it feels to drive a race car"

OPS: What's been most challenging during the development of *SHIFT 2*?

MN: There is no secret that getting to highly enjoyable

cars is hard. Getting them to be enjoyable for a broad majority of gamers is even harder. But thanks to the very capable physics engine developed by Slightly Mad Studios we have slowly managed to create an elite handling model which feels totally accurate and still with aides being turned on is accessible for the more casual gamer. A true challenge!

OPS: How difficult can it be to marry realism and fun?

MN: Very. Some very realistic sim racers are not fun. But that is not saying sim racers can't be fun. *SHIFT 2 Unleashed* stand for a new breed of sim racing where we are making it exiting to drive a vehicle that behaves realistically. The cockpit camera in *GT5* is not delivering what it feels to drive a race car. In a race car it's loud, things in the car move and vibrate, your head is not still for a split second. It's adrenaline filled and it's fun. You'll feel it instantly when jumping into the helmet cam of *SHIFT 2 Unleashed*.

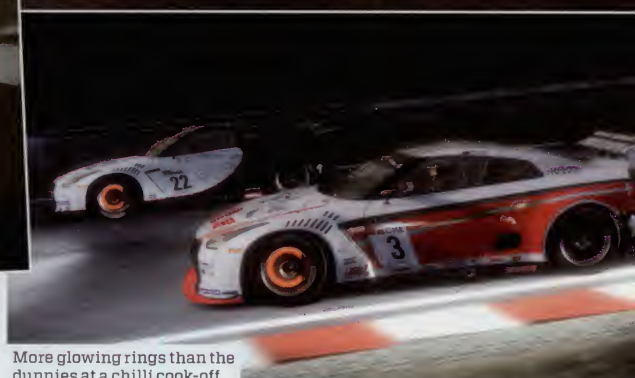
OPS: Can you mention some of these drivers you're working with to capture the feeling of doorhandle-to-doorhandle racing at high speed?

MN: As a matter of fact I'm in a hotel bar in London sitting next to Edward Sandstrom, a former Porsche Carrera cup winner and current driver of the BMW Z4 in GT3. Why don't we let him explain his contributions?

ES: First of all racing should be exciting, hard and demanding. *SHIFT* really thrills me in these objectives; the helmet cam brings so much feeling of epic racing in combination with great AI. I can't stop playing and I really have to keep an eye in the mirror, your opponents are true racers. Demanding is when you should balance the car on the limit without any driver aids, good then when I can find all the tools I have in reality to make sure the balance suits me and makes the car neutral. I really hate understeering and I think most racing drivers do. Actually it's the first time door to door racing works in a game from my experience. It has also been fantastic to be a part of setting the cars up. We have found a good feeling for speed and grip. This game feels alive and therefore you are in time with your inputs. The cars have a true balance of grip in combination with throttle and the steering input is sharp. Racing is very much to balance a car. Through



“Of course it is my aim to make a better game than [GT5]”



More glowing rings than the dunnies at a chilli cook-off

the possibility of using traction control and stability management you can have a perfect car for your level.

OPS: *GT5* is finally out now and while it's good it still lacks a bit of personality on the track, and the car list is heavily stacked towards the coolest cars of greater-than-six-years-ago. Is now the time for *SHIFT 2* to step up and challenge the big, first-party sims with a properly visceral racing game with a credible roster of tracks and cars that enthusiasts really appreciate? How about Bathurst?

MN: We make no secret that we are more simulation this time around and we have a very improved engine to back it up. I actually understand some of the feedback coming in from these days about the *SHIFT 1* physics. Not that they were bad but they were not tweaked to give the sim feeling we are tweaking this game to. As for *GT* and us, making a simulation game puts us in the same space and of course it is my aim to make a better game than them. I believe we have a great possibility to surprise sim players and redraw the power map in this category. We have chosen carefully to come up with an impressive 130-something car list, so double what we had last time. We also make a lot more tracks and counting all the variations we are closing in on 100. Bathurst, Suzuka, Spa and Nürburgring to name a few.

OPS: You guys can certainly be praised for arresting the slump the *Need for Speed* series was suffering from when you shipped the original *SHIFT* to a fantastic reception but since then *Hot Pursuit* has brought the brand another wave of even louder acclaim. *SHIFT* and *Hot Pursuit* are very different games no doubt, but is there any more pressure on the team thanks now to Criterion's effort with *Hot Pursuit*?

MN: We always knew what we needed to do. Criterion has made a game that is more addictive than any other driving game because of Autolog. It's really hard to let go of the controller when someone has beaten you. But of course it motivates us. The *Need for Speed* franchise is back on track since *SHIFT 1* and we intend to go beyond *SHIFT 1* for sure.

OPS: Arcade racing games tend to burn bright and fast while sims keep fans busy for years and years. What exactly is it about *SHIFT 2* that's going to make it totally impossible for a real racing fan to ignore?

MN: As I said, we are creating a new breed of simulation racing. Get away from innovating in numbers and create an immersive driving experience. Helmet cam is driving the franchise goal of always improve on the True Driver Experience which we started in *SHIFT 1*. Having said that, racing games is about handling and

how to control the car most effectively and that's where *SHIFT 2 Unleashed* really shines. The way you need to be careful on the accelerator coming out of a corner, taking into account the hundreds of horse power working in the engine, and when you nail the exit you feel so rewarded. The intensity of feeling all four wheels and learning how to manage them. The physics engine is so capable we will ship with a telemetry screen so the player gets feedback of multiple physics attributes running in real time as you race. It shows real time tyre temperatures across the tyres in multiple zones, dynamic real time suspension movement based on your setup. With this screen you can hone your car handling to perfection. 🏎️

▶ LAST CHANCE SALOON

Nilsson ducked our question about any local rides making the 130-or-so car cut. This could mean yes, there will be Australian cars back in the *Need for Speed* series (finally) but they're not being announced yet. It could mean the wheels are still in motion in securing some. Of course, it could mean there are none and Nilsson was disinclined to break the news mere days after the game was announced. The presence of Mount Panorama as a playable track is a pretty good sign, however. We've been let down by *GT5* already (no new Aussie cars, the same Holdens from *GT4* and no FPV) so come on! Give us some homegrown super sedans – and maybe a ute or two for good measure!

IN REALITY

Living in Rapture would be a nightmare, even without the mutants. We explain why

As seen in: *BioShock BioShock 2*

There's a grain of truth in the fantastical realm of Rapture, the sea-lab city of *BioShock*. More and more multi-billionaires are buying their own custom submersible yachts and exploring the exotic ocean depths. If you've got a few lazy million lying around, you too can splash out on a private sub. Two-thirds of the Earth's surface is covered with water – one might as well live in a device that can travel through it.

Yet even for the mega-rich, while the ocean may be a nice place to visit, none of them want to live there.

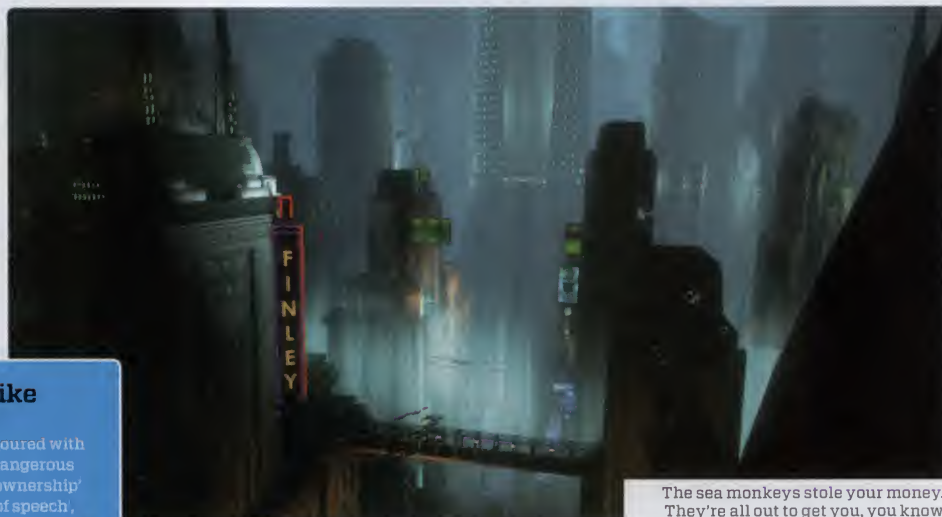
But why the hell not? Why aren't things so much better, down where it's wetter, under the sea?

At first, the ocean might seem like an inviting place to settle. All of the naturally-occurring elements can be found in seawater, and seafood is the healthiest food there is. The mineral resources of the sea floor are more or less untouched and, with twice as much sea bed as there is land, there would always be plenty of room to move around.

Alas, technical hurdles abound. First and foremost is the issue of cost. A suburban house only costs a couple of hundred grand to put together because it only needs to keep out wind, rain and the occasional miscreant. Slap a few bricks together and bam: house. The tremendous pressure of sea water even a few hundred metres down would

Party like it's 1773

Already enamoured with such giddily dangerous ideas as 'gun ownership' and 'freedom of speech', the mainstream populace of America has been whipped into a libertarian frenzy by the massive spending increases of its new hard-left President. Part and parcel with the new 'Tea Party' low-tax movement is a resurgent interest in the novels of the radical philosopher Ayn Rand. The plot of her dystopian epic *Atlas Shrugged* was loosely adapted into the premise for *BioShock*: the productive geniuses of the world, fed up with governments squandering their taxes on wasteful garbage, decide to sod right off and found their very own civilisation at a secret location.



The sea monkeys stole your money. They're all out to get you, you know

demand structures of thick, reinforced, structural steel, and transporting these custom living pods far from centres of industry would drive the price even higher. If you're struggling with the mortgage you have now, what kind of a job would you need to pay for a house that cost 10 million dollars? Or 20?

Every home, office, and promenade would need to be built to far higher standards, too. If a tradie cuts corners, and rainwater ruins your complete run of *Hellblazer* comics, it's not the end of the world. A leak in your undersea house-pod would be lethal.

On top of that, maintenance costs would be astronomical. As we touched on before, seawater is the universal solvent. Rust and decay would be unavoidable agents of entropy.

But even if you could get around the terrible natural disadvantages of pressure, corrosion, and cost, there would still be one factor that would be completely impossible to overcome

– and it's not being burglarised by a giant squid. It's social stagnation. People don't flock to cities because they enjoy paying \$10 a schooner for beer – they do it because it's only through clustering and mingling in vast numbers that economies of scale and bold new ideas can coalesce.

For proof of this, you simply need to step away from the bustle and hustle of Sydney or Melbourne and visit a sleepy backwater. Like, say, Adelaide. It's not the tap water or the wine that makes them stir-crazy.

Cut off from the world, enclosed on all sides, and with nothing but bottom-feeders on the menu, the citizens of Rapture wouldn't need to slurp on mutant slug spunk to lose their minds. They'd be out of their gourds inside of a month.

Sure, we have the technology the build an underwater city – but who'd want to live there? Not us.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

5.5 million
21

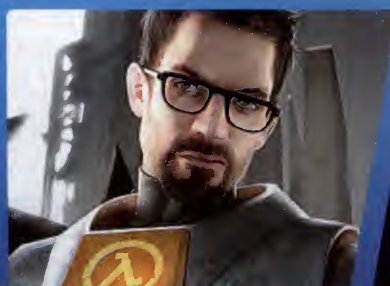
▲ Copies of GT5 shipped so far

▼ The number of different Mazda MX-5s in it



Separated at Birth!

NO. 23 Eric Clapton, meet Gordon Freeman. You're him without the headcrabs.



That's right folks, ol' slowhand, Eric Clapton – fret-shredder whose fingers defy known physics – is a twin for Gordon Freeman, theoretical physicist. Other similarities; Freeman is often voted the All Time Greatest Video Game Hero, whereas Clapton is the quintessential All Time Guitar Hero. But while one of these men openly expresses himself through song and instrument, the other only communicates to the world via bullets and a big, f-k-off crowbar.

► INFOCUS

MINDJACK

Though it may sound like a rad tantric sex technique designed for a solo participant, *MindJack* actually happens to be a near-future third-person shooter with a fairly unique gameplay twist.

The game takes place in AD 2031, when the world's governments are in decline and new corrupt organisations are rising. The plot revolves around a rogue team of agents who have the ability to "hack" into and control enemies, vehicles, or civilians.

Here's where things get cool; *MindJack* is a persistent online experience that allows one player to enter another player's single-player game as either an enemy character or ally. If you get overwhelmed you can even 'Mindslave' weakened AI enemies into joining your side.

Also? Massive, pissed off cyber-apes.



SO YOU WANT TO BE A ... SPECIAL OPERATIVE?

OPTION 1

To be part of an ultra, ultra elite US military unit you need to be an American citizen, and in either the Army, Navy or Air Force. We suspect the psychology and level of training required for the Australian equivalent is comparable.

Some background. Hank Keirsey is a retired Lieutenant Colonel who spent 24 years in the armed forces. For the last 10 years since he left the army he's been in and out of quasi mercenary/military assignments working with the Army and has spent time with – and trained – men who became Special Operatives. Keirsey helped Treyarch develop *Call of Duty: Black Ops*.

These guys are taken from all branches of the US armed forces. After six to 10 years in their regular outfit they can approach to join a Special Forces division. They are, in Keirsey's words, "a refined surgeon's implement used to pick and take out a bad cancer of a human."

The clandestine training course is a 30-60 days 'mindscrew', a never-ending compass course or you're told to run and stop only when told – and this is all before they even consider you. Once you get in you have six months of an operator training course, where you can walk into a room where some of the people are your fellow trainees, and some are paper targets. You have to quickly figure out which is which and shoot the paper targets.

You need to have extreme perseverance, and even when chaos is all around you need to see through it, keep your cool and come up with a plan of action. Those who succeed are both born with this innate ability and can also endure the training required.

Then you have to be able to lead a new 'normal' life. You're constantly on call though you are given rostered time off. Plus you need to be able to kill people, but as Keirsey told us, "You've been trained so well with targeting, and assets and told that these guys are bad guys that you're going through the motions of 'I'm putting one in the head and two in the chest and that's my big concern at this point'... There's not a lot of moral [questioning]."

TIME:

Six to 10 years in the Army, Navy or Air Force, 30-60 days on a mindscrew of a preliminary assessment, six months of operator training, then constant training inbetween missions. So anywhere between 11 years to an entire lifetime.

OPTION 2

Turn on *Call of Duty: Black Ops*

TIME:

Two minutes

► INTERVIEW

Ridin' DiRTy

OPS chats to **Paul Coleman**, senior designer at Codemasters, about *DiRT 3*'s return to its real rallying roots



Gym class: it's not all medicine balls and star jumps

OPS: This is your eighth rally game in 12 years; how has your design mantra changed?

PC: We have always pushed the design of our games to fit in the direction we have felt the world of off road racing has been going in. In the early years we were very focused on the rally racing that Colin McRae was involved in. As he diversified into events like Rally Raid and the X Games, we pushed our games in that direction. For *DiRT 3* we are shifting the experience to a more professional feel. This is reflected in our style, content and the events that the player enters when they in the *DiRT* Tour.

OPS: This is the biggest racing game that the racing studio has embarked upon - just how much content are we talking here?

PC: We have almost 100 routes spread over nine locations for the player to tackle... There are over 50 cars to get to grips with ranging from modern and classic rally cars to extreme rallycross and gymkhana cars.

OPS: Splitscreen is returning; why has it been gone for so long?

PC: We are delighted that splitscreen is in *DiRT 3*. We didn't want to just stick splitscreen in and risk jeopardising the quality of the game. We have pushed the Ego Engine to a point where we are satisfied that splitscreen is of a high enough standard to now be included.

OPS: *DiRT 2* was the most radical shift away from the usual expectations of rally in terms of attitude and it featured quite a few untraditional cars. What's the reason for switching back to a more 'traditional' rally scope?

PC: When we created the design for *DiRT 2* we wanted the game to feel like it was still about off road racing but made sure that it had extreme sports attitude. In retrospect we may have pushed it too far however there were some aspects of it that worked really well and those will continue to feature in the series. We had the chance to start work on *DiRT 3* as soon as *DiRT 2* had hit the shelves and so we made sure that we studied the telemetry data and listened to the feedback from gamers to make sure that we were giving them the game that they wanted. There was definitely a feeling that we didn't have enough rally in the game and not everyone appreciated the game's attitude so we decided to make a shift back towards the more professional side of off road racing.

OPS: What made Ken Block the go-to guy for this?

PC: Ken was a huge help during the development of *DiRT 2*. His friendship with Colin McRae and his contacts in America gave us a huge advantage when we were working on *DiRT 2*. His gymkhana videos have made such a huge impact that we just had to include them in *DiRT 3*.

OPS: What's the process like trying to license old race cars, with many car companies more interested in selling new cars rather than bothering with old ones. More or less complex than it sounds?

PC: I love my cars and so the original car list read like a who's who of rally from the last 60 years. The licensing process is pretty complicated and the list got whittled down but we have an awesome licensing team that work with the manufacturers to get the best cars we can in the game. It helps when you have a manufacturer that has both modern and classic cars but even when this is not possible we always do our utmost to give the game the best selection of cars we can.

OPS: Many developers fail to capture how loud cars are or they forget about other factors, like the clatter of crap pelting the underside. How do you get your sound?

PC: We have a really talented team of audio engineers and designers that do their utmost to get the sound as realistic as possible. They source as many of the cars as they can and then seek permission from the owners to get a ride. They record the sound of the cars when they are getting driven around, we avoid putting the cars on rolling roads so generally our recordings take place on airport runways. When it comes to the sound of stones clattering on the underside of the car they do special recording sessions at the Phil Price Rally School in Wales where they are able to focus on the kick up effects.

OPS: We couldn't fault *DiRT 2* technically but we didn't like it near as much as we liked the first *DiRT*. How is this going to be the game that makes Codemasters rally games great again?

PC: We have listened to the feedback from the previous games in the *DiRT* series and we have included more rally, legendary vehicles and the fantastic weather and time of day variations that create a real sense of the harsh conditions and epic environments that drivers encounter in off road racing. All of this coupled with the fantastic new gymkhana game mode and the social features such as YouTube video uploading will make this the definitive rally game in 2011.

► INFOCUS

FIGHT NIGHT CHAMPION

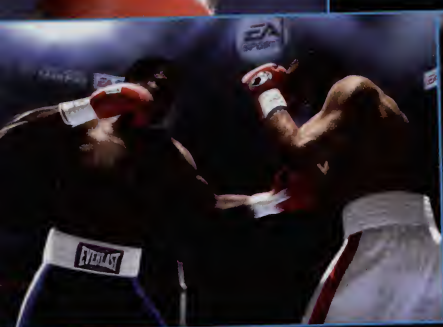
Every *Fight Night* we've seen thus far has been a fairly sanitized version of the sport. Sure, your haymakers were meatier than the Burger King product placements stuccoed around the ring, but EA did pull some punches on the brutality side of things.

Not so with *Champion*. By the time you earn a belt here you'll be harder than a coffin nail. These lads are out to hurt each other.

The crux of the game is the "Champion Mode" which is a story-driven element that revolves around the rise of a boxer named Andre Bishop. Legacy Mode (career mode) is returning as well.

EA is also promising a 50 boxer roster, including Eric 'Butterbean' Esch, a refined physics-based animation system and a new "Full Spectrum Punch Control" scheme.

A little bit o' pain never hurt anybody.



TOP 10

Sequels Nobody Asked For

After looking into titles that got rorted by not getting a sequel last month the cogs in our giant manly brains started turning. What about the flipside of the coin? What about those games that weren't exactly begging for a follow-up but got one anyway? Have a look at franchises that battled the odds for a chance at redemption.



Juiced 2 PS3

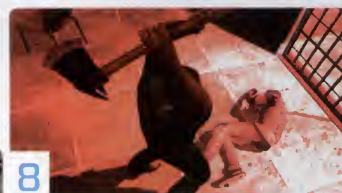
In 2005, *Juiced* hit the streets looking like a *Need for Speed* rip, but playing more like *Gran Turismo*. Confusing, right? *Juiced 2* ditched just about everything from its predecessor. Not knowing what it wanted to be made it a hard sell and it never really garnered a fan base.

Lost Planet 2 PS3

A classic case of going from bad to worse, the *Lost Planet* franchise had every opportunity to leave a lasting impression. But by ignoring its original flaws, coupled with a boring attempt at multiplayer, made sure this is one series no one wants found.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days PS3

Few games had such potential and failed as dismally. From a talented developer and with such a brilliant premise we all prepared for gaming glory. All we got in return was a broken cover system and less than average action. The sequel righted many of the wrongs though still left us wanting.



Manhunt 2 PSP/PS2

Considering the controversy behind *Manhunt*, a stealth/horror title that has you executing your way to freedom in a sick twist on Arnie's *The Running Man*, we're surprised Rockstar even bothered with a sequel. It's not even available in Australia anyway.

The Godfather II PS3

When you can't even secure the voice and/or likeness rights of pretty much the lead character (and Al Pacino can be got – he lent his to *Scarface: The World is Yours*) for a movie-based property, you know you're in trouble. It didn't really work, but then again, how could it?

Die Hard Trilogy 2

PSone

Many of us around the office still have calloused trigger fingers from the light gun sections alone of *Die Hard Trilogy*. The original was awesome. The lacklustre sequel was daft and ensured there would be no third outing.

Two Worlds II PS3

Touted as the *Oblivion* killer, though, far far from it, *Two Worlds* is probably the least worthy legitimate contender on this list. Like David Hasselhoff, it was big in Germany, proving there's no accounting for taste in that country. It doesn't even have a name built for sequels.



50 Cent: Blood on the Sand PS3

50 Cent: Bulletproof was a dud. The sequel, where you took apart the Middle East with a G-Unit partner in rhyme, was quite good. How can you not dig a game with a dedicated 'swear' button? Still, how did this even get off the ground?

Army of Two: The 40th Day PS3

Army of Two was a decent, although forgettable, mercenary massacre. EA was determined to make a brand out of it so it squeezed out another. *The 40th Day* did little to improve on the formula and it's almost frustratingly unplayable in single player.



10

Crazy Frog Racer 2 PS2

We still find it astounding that there was one *Crazy Frog Racer* release, let alone two? Ring-tone peddler Jamster has a lot to answer for when they created this nude, pixelated genital flaunting frog originally and unsurprisingly named 'The Annoying Thing'. Both games were crude cash-ins, and the less said about them, the better.

► INFOCUS

DEAD SPACE 2

Is *Dead Space* the future of survival horror? Some pundits are already happy to pass it the torch. When you imagine a true survival horror game you generally think back to the original *Silent Hill*, or perhaps even the slightly-more-action-oriented PSone era *Resident Evil* games.

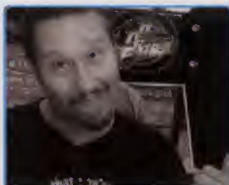
Proper survival horror has been missing in action for a few years now; even *Resident Evil 5* opted for an over-the-top action-packed co-op experience that favoured thrills over chills. Only *Dead Space* had the stones to *really* scare us.

If *Dead Space 2* manages to successfully retain the dark world and great pacing of the first game in addition to building upon the frantic and thrilling action sequences, we may well be looking at the horror game against which all future horror games are judged.

► IN YOUR FACE

Is the Lone Wolf an endangered species?

Are modern day, team-based shooters the wrong place for glory hounds?



Dave Kozicki

YES

There's not a grenade Dave wouldn't lay on to ensure victory for his wolf pack. It wouldn't be the first thing that's blown up in his face.

There is no "I" in "team". Nor is there in "Dave", as a matter of fact. This double-tapped analogy reinforces my stance to leave the one-man wolf pack notions and solo operators behind, as they die a horrible solitary death, and rather promote (through communication and teamwork) a cohesive unit, squad or side to ensure a victory on the digital battlefield.

The most frustrating part of playing any online shooter (say, *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*) is watching lone snipers pitch a tent as they increase their solo tally, teammates squandering their lives attacking objectives alone, or doing ludicrous things like taking a five-seater helicopter ON THEIR OWN. Employing some ridiculous desperate plan of attack with the disclaimer, "Hey, that's just crazy enough to work!" just doesn't fly here, soldier.

The only way to succeed repeatedly, regardless of game mode or map, is to work together and formulate a gameplan – even if it is on the fly. Simple things like spotting the enemy, holding position for a respawn and relaying back information as it evolves to your brothers in arms, be it enemy movement or co-ordinating assaults, gives you the ultimate edge. Two heads are better than one. More importantly, four arms are better than two. They can carry twice as many guns.

It's far more satisfying playing online knowing that, if one of you do kick the bucket as a decoy or mere metres away from your objective, you can respawn firm in the belief that your sacrifice was not in vain, and one of your online cohorts will complete your task as you shuffle this digital coil.

Back in the first glory days of online first-person shooters there wasn't such a hullabaloo about lone wolf players in team-based multiplayer. These players were feared and revered, depending whether you were playing with or against them, quickly turning the tide of battle when they appeared on a server or switched teams.

In this respect, these players were the Shane Warnes of the FPS arena. Although the Australian cricket team *used* to be capable of winning without the presence of Warnle, his appearance went a long way to ensuring victory.

And the same is true of the lone wolf.

There seems to be a lot of anger of late, directed at lone wolf players who, regardless of the game mode, take a Victoria Cross approach to felling fools. At the front of every charge and the rear of every retreat, the lone wolf's role isn't counter-productive to a team-based game; it's crucial.

Now, I'm certainly not condoning the selfishness of a *Bad Company 2* player in a ghillie suit, camped out in the corner of a map with a 12x scope, picking off players with relative anonymity. Not at all. What I'm talking about is the type of player whose digital bravery, persistent frontal charges and one-man-vs-the-world mentality screams motivation louder than any voice ever could over a Bluetooth headset.

Viva la lone wolf! Y'know, except for the fact that we don't always live for very long. Such is the gamble of our chosen profession.



Nathan Lawrence

NO

Nathan has been a lone wolf since his teen years when he exploited his odd ability to become his high school's star basketball player.

Want to hear more of the OPS team disagreeing with each other? Check out our Podcast available on side B of our cover disc. Want to get into a great debate with one of us, or a fellow reader? Hop onto www.facebook.com/OPSAustralia and make your case. The best topics may find their way into the magazine.

insane

IT SHOULD BE A PRODUCT!

Two heirlooms to treasure, forever



Here's your big chance to be *just like Duke*. Because nothing says "I'm a hyper-masculine, egotistical, machismo-filled womaniser" like having a he-plate in your man-parlour.

To celebrate the imminent release of *Duke Nukem Forever*, we've stumbled across a box of plates in our warehouse that we vaguely recall creating 12 years ago. We now have all the rat droppings washed off and have them available for purchase!

To make this deal even sweeter, speedy purchasers will also have the opportunity to get their hands on some limited edition *chrome truck nuts*.

Don't have a truck? No sweat! They're the perfect paperweight for your home office or workplace. Classy!

- Boom, I'll pay \$69.00 for the plate. ☐

- Shit yeah, here's an extra 40c to get the limited edition **chrome truck nuts** too! ☐

Name: _____

Address: _____

Credit Card #: _____

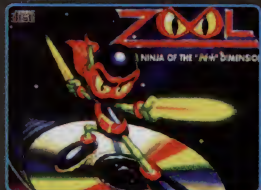
Times I'm not at home: _____

Send all orders to Narnia care of the Timbuktu, because this is fake as. If you're silly enough to actually send this out, your money is probably better spent on getting your head examined. We're taking zero responsibility.



Around the World in PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



▲ OLD SKZOO

🇬🇧 SHEFFIELD, ENGLAND

We bet you wish you went to uni in Sheffield. *Zool*, an ancient 1992 side-scrolling Amiga platformer, is getting another sequel. Seriously, its creator Ian Stewart has students at Sheffield-Hallam University in England working on it right now. How so? The uni has its own a goddamn games development studio! The best result will be turned into a PSP mini game, earning its creators a humble degree in video game excellence while their masters roll around in swimming pools of hard cash. Child labour: now high tech.



▲ PLAYSTATION-GON

🇺🇸 VIRGINIA, USA

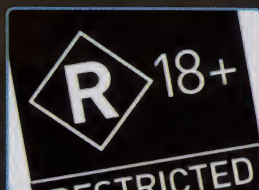
If you've wondered what mysterious all-powerful monolith of computing power lies at the heart of the Pentagon, it's a PS3. Or, more accurately, 1760 of them. As any five-star general worth his red meat breakfast knows, PS3s can be run in "clusters" to build supercomputers. The "Condor Cluster" as the US Military's PS3 legion is ominously dubbed, is capable of pushing 500 teraflops, meaning it can calculate 500 trillion floating point operations a second. We hear it's pretty good at multiplayer *Black Ops* campaigns too. But that's just a rumour.



▲ SAFE SEX

🇪🇸 LLIEDA, SPAIN

There's nothing more gutting in *GTA* than pulling up for a kerb-crawling quickie, only to mow down the object of your affection with your Blista Compact. Maybe Rockstar can take a lead from the Policia, who are forcing ladies of the night to brighten up by wearing reflective bibs, with a \$56 dollar fine for those that don't. "Prostitutes have been fined for two reasons: not wearing the reflective jacket and creating danger on the highway," said a spokesman for the regional force. Presumably they get to take them off while they're on the job.



▲ ACCESS DENIED

🇦🇺 CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

Gamers again exhaled a sigh of disappointment when the Attorneys-General failed to agree on an R18+ classification for Australia in December last year during the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General (SCAG). Any further discussion of the matter has now been postponed until the next SCAG in March. All of the AGs must agree unanimously for a change to occur. "It's disappointing that an adult rating for videogames will be delayed once again," said Ron Curry, CEO of the Interactive Gaming and Entertainment Association.



▲ PS2TV

🇬🇧 LONDON, ENGLAND

10 years after its initial release and the PlayStation 2 is the world's best selling console, having sold over 147 million units worldwide. It's going to sell a few more in the UK, after Sony launched a 22 inch Bravia television with a built in PS2. Selling for the equivalent of \$320, the Sony Bravia KDL-22PX300 is 720p HD ready, with HDMI ports, two optical digital outputs, inputs for component cables and just about every other audio-visual connection available. It also comes with a PlayStation 2 controller. We don't know why but we want one.

INTERNATIONAL TOP 10 CHARTS

🇪🇺 EUROPE



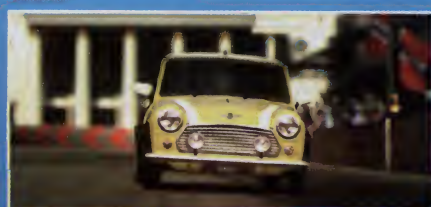
- 1 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 2 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 3 **Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** Ubisoft
- 4 **FIFA 11** EA
- 5 **Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit** EA
- 6 **Medal of Honor** EA
- 7 **Fallout: New Vegas** Bethesda
- 8 **PES 2011** Konami
- 9 **Sports Champions** Sony
- 10 **Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 2** Namco Bandai

🇯🇵 JAPAN



- 1 **Tales of Graces f** Namco Bandai
- 2 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 3 **World Soccer Winning Eleven 2011** Konami
- 4 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Square Enix
- 5 **Trinity Zill O'll Zero** Tecmo
- 6 **Dragon Ball: Raging Blast 2** Namco Bandai
- 7 **Beat Sketch!** Sony
- 8 **Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 2** Namco Bandai
- 9 **BioHazard 5** Capcom
- 10 **Sports Champions** Sony

🇺🇸 USA



- 1 **Gran Turismo 5** Sony
- 2 **Call of Duty: Black Ops** Activision
- 3 **God of War Collection** Sony
- 4 **Assassin's Creed Brotherhood** Ubisoft
- 5 **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves** Sony
- 6 **God of War III** Sony
- 7 **Sports Champions** Sony
- 8 **Madden NFL 11** EA
- 9 **LittleBigPlanet** Sony
- 10 **Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit** EA

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and the good stuff!

Australian Open

The world's tennis greats arrive in Melbourne to compete in the first Grand Slam tournament of the year. Last year had record crowd attendance - will it be beaten this year? We have a symbolic dollar on Andy Murray and Serena Williams to emerge as champions.

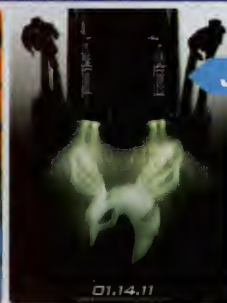
Jan 17



Jan 20

The Green Hornet

Now here's a movie we can relate to as fellow journos (true), and night-time vigilantes (false). Seth Rogen stars as Britt Reid, playboy and heir to LA's largest newspaper fortune, and Jay Chou is Kato, a company employee. Armed with the Black Beauty, an indestructible car with more weapons than the *Call of Duty* series, they pose as villains to bring crime lords undone. It's in cinemas today.



Jan 21

Big Day Out

The Big Day Out music festival starts today in Auckland, before crossing the pond to the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and finally wrapping up in Perth on Feb 6. Noteworthy performers include Muse, LCD Soundsystem and Australia's own Washington.



Jan 24

Tool

Tool play at the Brisbane Entertainment Centre tonight in what should be an orgy of sound. Doors open at 8pm but we bet you a \$1 they're not on until, oh, at least 8.30pm



Jan 26

Australia Day

Our national public holiday is right in the middle of the week. It's like a mini weekend! Go to www.australiaday.org.au for more ideas than just stuffing yourself full of snags.



Jan 26

True Grit

The Coen brothers direct this modern version of a classic Western, based on the book by Charles Portis. Set in the mid 19th Century a young girl sets out to avenge the death of her father with the help of a one-eyed Marshall who has enough 'grit' in his soul to help her. Stars Jeff Bridges and Hailee Steinfeld.



Jan 27

Dead Space 2

Isaac Clarke returns, driven mad by his time exposed to the Marker. Not mad enough to stop obliterating Necromorphs, however. The original was an awesome - we're expecting big things of this.



Jan 28

Mass Effect 2

Bioware's epic series debuts on PS3 today. It's part RPG, part third-person action, and it's utterly compelling as Commander Shepard travels the universe on a hunt for the Collectors, a race that are abducting humans.



Feb 3

Test Drive Unlimited 2

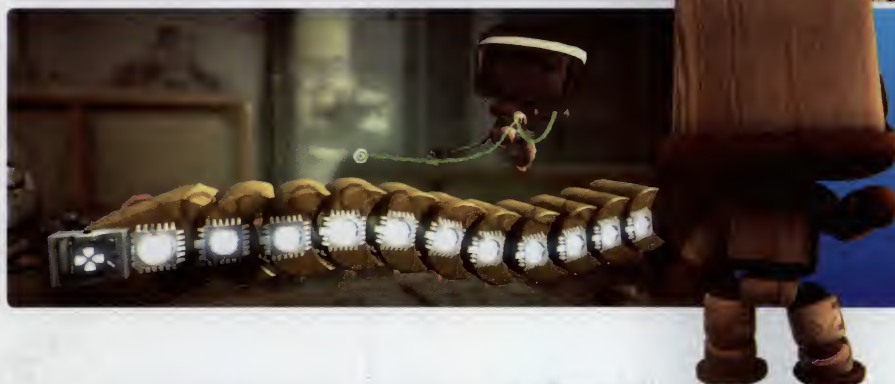
The original *Test Drive Unlimited* was an excellent concept hampered by last gen's tech. Now, though, the open world racer is back with tonnes of fast cars as you live the life of a wannabe racer on the party island of Ibiza. Not content with just one sun-soaked island paradise? No worries, because the developer has crammed Hawaii back in for good measure. See page 44 for our initial impressions.



Can't miss...

LittleBigPlanet 2 JANUARY 20

Sackboy's back! We've been teased for months by info about how you can create your own games beyond the usual platform genre: prepare to lose your life crafting the perfect homage to... something.



Release Schedule

Release dates, pre-order deals, new information and much more

OUT NOW

Call of Duty: Black Ops
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision

Need for Speed Hot Pursuit
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows
Genre: Action Distributor: EA

Assassin's Creed Brotherhood
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft

NBA Jam
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing Distributor: Sony

TRON: Evolution
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ

The Sly Collection
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Sony

JANUARY 2011

DC Universe Online
Genre: MMO Distributor: Sony
Date: January 13

Mass Effect 2
Genre: Action RPG
Distributor: EA Date: January 20

LittleBigPlanet 2
Genre: Platformer
Distributor: Sony Date: January 20

Dead Space 2
Genre: Action Distributor: EA
Date: January 27

MindJack
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

FEBRUARY 2011

Test Drive Unlimited 2
Genre: Racing Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners
Date: February 10

Bulletstorm
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: February 24

de Blob 2
Genre: Platformer Distributor: THQ
Date: February 24



Killzone 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

MARCH 2011

Dragon Age II
Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA
Date: March 10

Crisis 2
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA
Date: March 24

SHIFT 2 Unleashed
Genre: Racing Distributor: EA
Date: TBC

Homefront
Genre: Shooter Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

Child of Eden
Genre: Puzzle Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

APRIL 2011

L.A. Noire
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBC

SEPTEMBER 2011

Resistance 3
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

NOVEMBER 2011

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
Genre: RPG Distributor: Bethesda
Date: TBC

TBC 2011

Final Fantasy XIV Online
Genre: RPG Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

Mortal Kombat
Genre: Fighting Distributor: Warner Bros.
Date: TBC

Batman: Arkham City
Genre: Action Distributor: Warner Bros.
Date: TBC

Tomb Raider
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Ubisoft Date: TBC

Duke Nukem Forever
Genre: Shooter Distributor: 2K
Date: TBC

Marvel vs Capcom 3: Fate of Two Worlds
Genre: Fighting Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

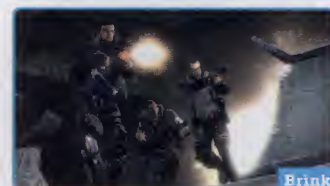
Deus Ex: Human Revolution
Genre: Shooter/RPG Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC

inFAMOUS 2
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

Bodycount
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC

Warhammer 40K: Space Marine
Genre: Action Distributor: THQ
Date: TBC

The Agency
Genre: Action Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC



Brink
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action Distributor: 2K
Date: TBC

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft
Date: TBC

Mass Effect 3
Genre: Action RPG Distributor: EA
Date: TBC

LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars
Genre: Action-adventure
Distributor: Activision
Date: TBC

Metal Gear Solid: Rising
Genre: Action Distributor: Mindscape
Date: TBC

True Crime: Hong Kong
Genre: Action Distributor: Activision
Date: TBC

Portal 2
Genre: Puzzle Distributor: EA
Date: TBC

Hunted: The Demon's Forge
Genre: Action Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners
Date: TBC

Agent
Genre: Action Distributor: Rockstar
Date: TBC

Arcania: Gothic 4
Genre: RPG Distributor: AFA
Date: TBC

► Limited Edition

CRYSIS 2

Whether you play it in stereoscopic or standard 2D, *Crisis 2* drops players into a devastated New York in the midst of an attack by a frightening alien species. Surrounded by catastrophic destruction, players harness the superhuman abilities of the Nanosuit to level the playing field in this shooter from Crytek, becoming the ultimate weapon on a mission to save New York.

Limited Edition includes:

Bonus XP – Players will jump into multiplayer battles with an edge by starting with enough experience points to gain early access to all 5 preset class load-outs.

SCAR Hologram Decoy – This special attachment to the SCAR will project a hologram image of the player, allowing them to confuse their opponents with the decoy.

SCAR Weapon Skin – This digital camouflage skin will allow players to add a personalized touch to one of the more popular assault rifles in the game.

Platinum Dog Tag – This special one-of-a-kind dog tag is one of over 250 that will be collectible in *Crisis 2* multiplayer, helping to separate you from the rest of the field.



GAME \$96 (web only price)
Estimated dispatch date:
24 March 2011

Ace Combat: Assault Horizon
Genre: Flight Sim **Distributor:**
 Namco Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC

Alice: Madness Returns
Genre: Action **Distributor:** EA
Date: TBC

DiRT 3
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Namco
 Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC

DmC
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ
Date: TBC

Driver: San Francisco
Genre: Racing **Distributor:** Ubisoft
Date: TBC

**El Shaddai: Ascension of the
 Metatron**
Genre: Action **Distributor:** TBC
Date: TBC

F.E.A.R. 3
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Warner
 Bros. **Date:** TBC

Fight Night Champion
Genre: Sports **Distributor:** EA
Date: TBC

RAGE
Genre: Adventure **Distributor:**
 Bethesda **Date:** TBC

Michael Jackson: The Experience
Genre: Music **Distributor:** Ubisoft
Date: TBC



The Last Guardian

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure **Distributor:**
 Sony **Date:** TBC

**The Lord of the Rings:
 War in the North**
Genre: RPG **Distributor:** Warner
 Bros. **Date:** TBC

► Pre-order DRAGON AGE II

Experience the epic sequel to the 2009 Game of the Year from the critically acclaimed makers of *Dragon Age: Origins*. You are one of the few who escaped the destruction of your home. Now, forced to fight for survival in an ever-changing world, you must gather the deadliest of allies, amass fame and fortune, and seal your place in history.

Signature Edition includes:

- *Dragon Age II*
- In-game digital armoury
- Bonus character and missions
- Downloadable game soundtrack

EB GAMES \$108
 Estimated dispatch
 date: 10 March 2011
 (web only price)

GAME \$99
 Estimated dispatch
 date: 10 March 2011
 (web only price)

JB HIFI \$99
 Estimated dispatch
 date: March 2011



Max Payne 3
Genre: Action **Distributor:**
 Rockstar **Date:** TBC

Operation Flashpoint: Red River
Genre: Shooter **Distributor:** Namco
 Bandai Partners **Date:** TBC

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
Genre: Platformer **Distributor:**
 Sony **Date:** TBC

Red Faction: Armageddon
Genre: Action **Distributor:** THQ
Date: TBC

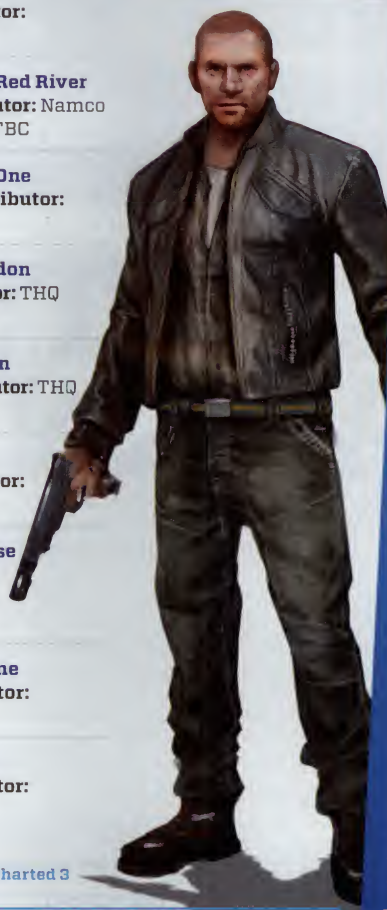
Street Fighter X Tekken
Genre: Fighting **Distributor:** THQ
Date: TBC

Virtua Tennis 4
Genre: Sports **Distributor:**
 SEGA **Date:** TBC

MotorStorm Apocalypse
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony
Date: TBC

NASCAR 2011: The Game
Genre: Racing **Distributor:**
 Activision **Date:** TBC

SSX: Deadly Descents
Genre: Racing **Distributor:**
 Activision **Date:** TBC



Uncharted 3

In their WORDS

Industry chatter, inside
 tips and loose lips



"It was just going to be a
 bad game"

EA Sports head of worldwide
 development **Andrew Wilson** on the
 cancellation of *NBA Elite 11*. He chose the
 wrong day to give his spin-doctor some
 time off.

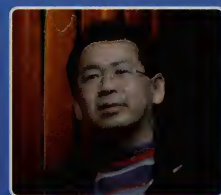


"If you're having
 no fun making
 your game then
 you're in trouble"

Hello Games boss
Sean Murray thinks
 developers should
 be more enthusiastic
 when it comes to
 not only developing
 games, but when

showing their works off to the public.

"The problem
 is that the
 industry
 focuses too
 much on the
 extravagance of
 the graphics"



Industry legend **Yu Suzuki** says the difference
 between game development today and back
 when he was creating *Virtua Fighter* is that
 developers now focus more on visuals than
 creativity.



"10 years ago it was easier to predict
 what would happen three years in
 future. Nowadays no one knows what
 happens in the future. In three years,
 we don't know what will happen"

Head of Polyphony Digital, **Kazunori Yamauchi**,
 isn't sure whether *Gran Turismo 6* will be released
 on PS3 or beyond.

► Pre-Order

BULLETSTORM

Players step into the role of Grayson Hunt complete with an arsenal of over-the-top combat moves and outrageously large guns. *Bulletstorm's* 'skillshots' system rewards players for inciting mayhem in the most creative way possible. The more insane the skillshot, the more points players collect to upgrade their character and unlock weapons, which then allows them to execute even more creative moves and exaggerated skillshots.

EB GAMES \$108
 Estimated dispatch date:
 24 February 2011
 (web only price)

GAME \$89
 Estimated dispatch date:
 24 February 2011
 (web only price)

JB HIFI \$105
 Estimated dispatch date:
 24 February 2011
 (web only price)





HEARTS OF DARKNESS

The problem with the truth is that once you've seen it, you can't UN-see it...

Wikileaks. What a disaster. At first the release of this treasure-trove of classified insider knowledge seemed too good to be true – the secrets of governments and businesses laid bare, a magic pudding of delicious, forbidden facts. But soon that taste turned sour. The more we learned about the inner workings of the corridors of power, the more we were filled with disgust. And the worst is still to come, as the reptiles of the press scour ever-deeper, each day unearthing shocking new revelations.

Sure, a lot of them are common knowledge, or common sense. We all knew that Jeff Minter lives on a remote hobby farm with an assortment of exotic barnyard animals, and we all suspected that the Labor government's old anti-gaming agenda stemmed from some hidden neurosis of its former leader. And sure enough, Wikileaks revealed that Kevin Rudd lost a game of *Archon* once in 1983, and to this day bears a grudge against all video games. Only after Gillard ascended to the leadership was the ban on PSPs in cabinet meetings finally lifted.

Yes, we all giggled when we saw that one of the sites on the top-secret internet block list held nothing but MP3s of Stephen Conroy blowing his stack after ranking last in a *Warhawk* tournament. But then things started to get weird.

We learned, for instance, that *Supreme Commander* creator Chris Taylor demands that all his programmers wear tuxedos at their desks, and address him as 'your excellency.' We read with grim interest of the daily habits of 'Chester', Peter Molyneux's trained monkey, and, as we now know, his primary game design consultant.

And who could forget the front-page headlines when we found out that Denis Dyack is not only threatening to finish his *Too Human* trilogy, but that it will now be 10 games long. 'A mere trio of games is an inadequate vessel to hold the wellspring of my genius', he confided to a lederhosen-clad aide on his private zeppelin, floating somewhere over the Arctic Circle.

Alas, that confidence is now broken.


"We all knew that Jeff Minter lives on a remote hobby farm"

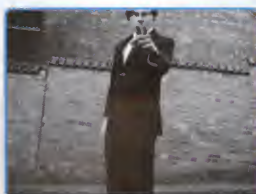
Worst of all was the truth behind a certain fatal design flaw in a certain console made by a certain American software company. After a billion dollars in warranty claims for console failures, fires, and even explosions, the awful truth

was exposed. The chip that caused all that trouble wasn't defective because of QA cost-cutting – a disgruntled engineer sabotaged it on purpose. At his disciplinary hearing, he simply told his superiors that he 'did it for the lulz.'

As of this writing, the full scope of the Wikileaks scandal has yet to be uncovered, and Julian Assange has threatened to unleash a wad of even more scandalous intel should he ever be apprehended by the authorities. He's boasted of the governments he's overthrown, but who knows how much *more* damage he could do to the games industry. Maybe we don't *want* to know about the (possibly fabricated) hidden lives of these gaming icons.

Assange has demonstrated that he can't be bought, bullied, reasoned, or negotiated with. Why does he cause so much suffering? Because it's the only thing that will put a smile on his face.

Some men just want to watch the world burn. 



OPINION
James Cottee

James Cottee is a veteran videogame journalist and *Rambo III* fan. He's not a product of his own imagination, but you may be.

A guy
hitting a girl
I reckon that's
way over it



the line

visit australia.gov.au/theline

MAKE 'EM SQUIRM

Jumping on platforms, shooting dudes in the face and robbing banks is fun, but the real future of gaming isn't about fun. It's about philosophy, uncomfortable situations and serious business.

Games these days are too easy. Scratch that, they've always been too easy.

Of course, I'm not referring to the trivialities of difficulty, the number of obstacles between point A and point B. We're talking psychological challenge here. Pushing the player to the edge of their own philosophical cliff. Making people feel uncomfortable.

Some games have dipped their toes in already. If you're talking about depressing games then you can't go past *Heavy Rain*, a game in which the happiest scene in the entire story forces you to console a small boy about his dead bird. The real gut-wrenchers here come in the moments outside dodging serial killers with sledgehammers and cutting off your finger for some sympathy poontang, like when you're given the option to send your depressed child to bed with nothing to eat and he tells you how much he hates you. Or you decide to just try failing the game's tests of your fatherly devotion for completion's sake, then deal with that horrible feeling in your throat telling you how much of a asshole you are.

Of course all these events are optional. Games like this generally give you an escape clause, so you can pick the option that minimises that squishy feeling. But then there are those times where you have no choice, or the choices given to you are a cruel joke. One particularly dire mission in *Mass Effect* has you running off to help a comrade in trouble, but halfway there a party member in the opposite direction is about to explode. You have to choose who to go after, and the one you don't help dies. Forever. Sure, the choice is really easy because you just kill off the dull twat and keep the hot racist chick, but the idea is sound.

The original *Half-Life* ends with a similarly binary choice: work for a man who you despise – and who, more than likely, is attempting to engineer the end of the world – or die. And you have to choose, making you complicit in the entire messy, hateful business.

Back in *Heavy Rain*, the night club scene causes the most discomfort. Madison Paige – the game's only female co-lead

– needs to get information and the only way to do that is by performing a striptease. At gunpoint. That sinking feeling you're getting from this scene? It's the feeling of being functionally complicit in a sexual assault.

People go to see films filled with horrid, despicable things all the time. Said films usually win awards and people refer to

them as "important". The difference is that a film requires no interaction. If a character does something terrible, we can watch on and perhaps discuss it later while wearing thick-framed glasses. With games, you're holding the controller,

effectively responsible for anything the character does and any consequences. There are small glimpses of what could be done, but would anyone willingly play a game that bent their brains over a table? **B**

"People go to see films filled with despicable things all the time"



OPINION
Andy Astruc

Andy Astruc is a gamer and writer from Wellington, New Zealand. When not playing games, Andy plays other games. He always chooses the most awkward dialogue options.

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EVERYBODY WINS AT HIDE AND EXPLODE

Because when everybody is an absolute
ninja at shooting, no-one is.

I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this: tactics in future first-person shooters just went to hell in a hand grenade. Any FPS made from this day forward will have you and your buddies behaving with all the strategic sense of piranhas in beef soup. Why will we need to flail about in constant, random patterns to survive? Recent advances in military tech just made 'taking cover' the number one option for dead men walking.

Ladies and gents, please give a warm welcome to the real-life gun that you'll soon be head-butting your TV over: the XM25 Counter Defilade Target Engagement System. Or, as we like to call it, the 'Uber Noob Tube Shut Up and Die Now'. Here's how this happy chap will be killing you in some future (hopefully digital) battlefield.

It's a picturesque day in downtown Fakeasthistan and you've just settled in for a spot of camping in the sort of sniper perch that'd give Lee Harvey Oswald half a mongrel. You're three storeys up, the dusty street below is the perfect killzone and – most important of all – you can duck behind the double-brick wall framing your tiny window. Whilst sipping some coffee with one hand, you use the other to lazily fire off a few rounds at the jerk packing 'that XM25... thing'.


Clicking empty, you lean behind your bricks to reload, plan your future shots and pick your nose. You don't know it yet, but you've just signed your own death warrant, Nostrildamus.

The dude with the XM25 sights your impenetrable wall from the street with a laser range-finder. His readout says 600m. Smirking like the sick, sadistic 13-year-old that he is, he adjusts his firing mode to 601 metres, aims left a smidge at your empty window and tugs the trigger. What happens next is as glorious as it is frighteningly cheap. Without even needing to adjust for gravity

a 25mm grenade 'thoomps' out, travels exactly 601 metres into your booger bordello and detonates right next to your face. It ruins your day somewhat, not to mention your haircut.

Repeat this scenario several hundred times during the course of a 10-minute match, and you can imagine why this gun could spell the end of sensible online FPS tactics. Even people who only casually use cover will be rorted by this; the mindless zig-zaggers will inherit the earth. We need to stop this bastard in its tracks right now, before it is implemented in the next *CoD* or *MoH*.

Am I exaggerating about the effectiveness of this gun? Not at all. When the XM25 was recently deployed in Afghanistan the studies that came back showed that the weapon was "300 percent more effective than current weapons at the squad level". Yep, this sucker can turn 'Hans Marksmole' into 'Deadeye McNorris'.

Game developers, if you're listening: single-player inclusion: most definitely. Multiplayer unlockable: sweet Jesus Christ no. 

**"You've just signed your
own death warrant,
Nostrildamus"**



OPINION

Adam Mathew

Adam Mathew plays lots of games. Reports that Adam is stronger than a ninja, or a bear (or a ninja bear) are inconclusive.



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Live it again tomorrow.*



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visit australiaday.org.au



TOP DOWN

Remember the Golden Rule:
he who has the gold makes the rules

Carter Pinsky, videogame industry bigwig, was beaming. A large part of that was due to the extensive facial surgery he'd received over the past 12 months. He actually couldn't frown anymore, even if he tried. Kids were buying more and more videogames every day.

Best of all, adults were too. All those geeks he used to systematically verbally and physically abuse in high school back in the '80s had grown up and kept playing games. Now they were making him rich. It was too perfect.

He strode past the secretary of fellow corporate kingpin Baz Buchwald, deliberately failing to look directly at her. She was expecting him anyway and, besides, Carter made a point of not looking at women over the age of 25.

"Evelyn," Carter barked. "There's a rolled up rug in the back of my Camaro. Arrange to get rid of it."

For a brief moment he worried that, instead of the neighbour's dog he struck last night, he just may have rolled up the heavily tranquillised college cheerleader he found on his couch that morning. The constant stress of his elite role, greenlighting the world's most lucrative videogames, meant he had frequent blackouts.

He pushed the thought from his mind as he entered Baz's office.

"Carter!" Baz bellowed from behind his strikingly huge desk. Flecks of brunch cocaine clung to remnants of the breakfast cocaine that was littered through his bushy moustache.

"Baz!" shot Carter. "New desk?"

"Yep!"

Baz stood up and attempted to place his foot upon the immense piece of furniture, like he was posing over a freshly-killed elephant. It was, of course, too high — so he settled with awkwardly rubbing his knee on the edge.

"You like? It's made from the wood of the Bois Dentelle tree. Before I came along there were only two of them left in the world. I found them high in a cloud forest on Mauritius."

"So now there's just one left?" asked Carter.

"Nope!" snorted Baz. "I used both of them!"

They both laughed. Carter was waiting until Baz stopped laughing before he did. They laughed for three minutes before Baz passed out momentarily, slumping forward and bashing his face against the now-extinct timber. He came to with a start. His nose was bleeding but it didn't seem to faze him.

"What can I do you for Pinsky?" asked Baz, noticing the wad of documents in Carter's hand.

Carter tossed the papers on Baz's Bois desk and sank into the nearest chair.

"Game design documents," Carter said. His voice was laced with disdain even though his face couldn't show it. "I had them summarised into one sentence and read aloud to me during my last series of medicinal massages."

"Bah!" spat Baz. "What have these nerds come up with now?"

Carter shuffled the papers and angled a few towards himself.

"Well, the first is an epic fantasy where a young man must travel across a vast, empty expanse on horseback and defeat 16 massive beings, known simply as colossi."

Carter looked up to see Baz already sneering.

"Sounds like a colossal waste of time to me," said Baz. "Is that the whole game?"

"Yep," said Carter, glancing at the paper in front of him.

"I hate it, and so will everyone else. Sounds terrible. Next."

Carter flicked to another sheet.

"Okay, here's one; proposing we take one of our popular World War II games and set it in the modern world instead."

A fine mist of coffee erupted from Baz's mouth as he blew it all over his priceless desk. He hadn't been drinking it at the time Carter spoke; he'd actually taken a sip just to spit it out.

"Madness!" he exclaimed. "When we're on a good thing we exploit it until it's milked dry! You don't change horses mid-race!"

Carter nodded in agreement and moved on.

"A crime saga set in a sprawling world where you control the pace."

"Boring."

"A Greek god takes on ancient mythology on his quest for revenge."

"Risky."

"Elderly, eye-patch-wearing super-soldier must crush his evil half-brother's plans for world domination."

"Gay. Come now, Carter — original ideas are out. Nobody will ever buy this garbage!"

Baz pounded on his desk for effect. Two of his fingers snapped in the process, but it seemed he was impervious to actual pain.

"We might as well start setting fire to our money right now."

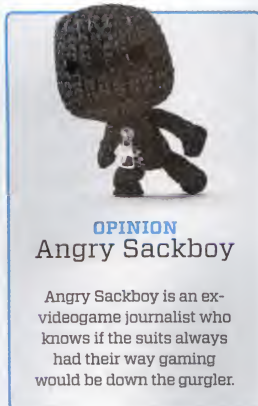
Baz scooped up the rolled \$100 note on his desk and set it alight in a passionate demonstration. Part of the blazing bill fell on his desk, which started to burn.

"You're a wise man, Baz. Beer?" asked Carter.

"You're on," said Baz. The flames on his desk had begun to take hold but he ignored it as they left the room.

Carter considered asking Evelyn to fetch a fire extinguisher, but he figured she'd smell the smoke eventually. ☹

**"He came to with a start.
His nose was bleeding but
it didn't seem to faze him"**



OPINION Angry Sackboy

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist who knows if the suits always had their way gaming would be down the gurgler.

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▼ LETTER OF THE MONTH

GAMING 4 LIFE

First off I would like to say I very much enjoy your work and look forward to the time of each month in which I receive your magazine. It gives me something to look forward to. Thank you.

Now I myself have noticed of recent a lot of criticism against games and the apparent damage that they can do to one person. Apparently that starts off at a young age.

I won't say this is incorrect but I would like to put across my point of view and what I have been through because I believe my life has been better because of gaming.

I was born as a child with epilepsy so I would have random seizures at the worst of times, and had to endure large and dangerous episodes for a small amount of years in my early life. I eventually got medicine that helped to cure my epilepsy, but due to having the condition my fine motor skills were ruined – stuff like holding a pencil or cutting paper with scissors.

I started to take drugs for my epilepsy before and throughout my first two years of school and because of those drugs I would sleep through numerous classes and not learn much.

Eventually I got given a PSone by third grade and because

of the co-ordination required with playing games, I gained the ability to hold pencils, write and cut with scissors all within a year of starting gaming.

Now I am 17 and still enjoying gaming but for a different reason. Because when I was 13 I was diagnosed with a life threatening heart condition, that can cause death upon exhaustion, so I'm not allowed to play even the most menial of sports. So to keep my self out of trouble and distracted from my heart condition, I game. To give myself something to do in my spare time and to allow myself the ability to do things that I have never been able to do and be able to do.

So to anyone wishing to criticise games, maybe you should think about the things that games are able to grant those unfortunate enough to not be able to do things others take for granted.

Timothy Durrant, via email

Well said, Timothy. Videogames are tools that can greatly enrich our lives, both mentally and physically.

Personally, we'd have a much shallower view of life if it wasn't for our game experiences (especially on the topics of cars, WWII and zombies).

Hey, anti-gamers, stick this success story in you pipe and smoke it.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A COPY OF:

GRAN TURISMO 5

Congratulations Timothy. The *Top Gear* Test Track beckons!



Your typical Xbox and Wii users?

Jagged Jaggy Alliance

Hi OPS,

Great mag. Down to business.

I am writing in response to Ryan Joseph's email posted in last month's issue (The Peacewalker, Jan 2011). While I agree entirely with the OPS point, I did want to try and shine a positive light (it's Christmas, after all!) on the gamer tribalism you talked about which most people see as a negative.

I am 28 years old. Not many of my mates are gamers, although those who are choose to play an inferior console to mine. I am severely out numbered in the disputes that Ryan talks about and, what's worse, I don't have the technical nous to know the first thing about gigawatts and flux capacitors. I own a "big" TV and my speakers are "loud" – get my drift? I don't know what the processing difference between my PS3 and my mate's Xbox is, all I know is mine doesn't have a red ring like a baboon's coight! I like games, and I like my PS3 but I don't believe this completely divides us as gamers. To simply say that there's three tribes of gamers is foolish at best and it underestimates our potential power as a single cohesive unit.

Get me the biggest fanboys of the three consoles and I guarantee you I can bring them together. How? Have them argue over which console is better in front of a person who doesn't play games and thinks they're too violent or are just for kids.

Think about this – when have you ever met someone with an Xbox who disagreed on your stance over an R18+ classification because you were from the other side of the fence? When someone was having a go at you about games being for little kids, when have you ever said "Yeah, but only on Xbox!?" We're gamers. Of course we all pick a console, but we're still all part of the same breed.

Gamers are tribal, but we're all in the same tribe! PS3 and Xbox are like twins arguing over who was born first while the Wii is like their little brother who they beat up on. Sure, these three children will bicker, argue and fight each other all day long, but when there's a common enemy, watch even the youngest one curb stomp any of these whining little bitches who complains that games are too violent these days! No matter how harsh we bag each other, we've always got each other's backs when it comes to anti-gamers!

When faced with moronic and closed minded opposition (like bureaucrats) imagine how awesome it would be to have the United Gamers Front (or the Front of Gamers United). Think about it – one body representing ALL gamers to push for sane and rational laws regarding classification. When a studio misses deadline after deadline (you know who you are) the UGF could be on the case for ALL of us. It would be like the United Nations of Gamers, and sure we'll argue behind the scenes, but we would represent a united front to the world!

Now I'd love to start this organisation, but no one takes gamers who are my age seriously and I'll just screw it up for everyone. I'll leave it up to one of these young bucks with the rap music and the roller skates to do it – this will keep them away from competitive online for a day so

Speak to us!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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Broken redemption system is broken? If yes, you fix

"We've always got each other's backs when it comes to anti-gamers"

I won't get shot to shit every time I log on. United we stand, divided we fall. Fall like the spirits of my mate Paul, whose Xbox just died on him for the second time that is!

Jess Page, via email

Tribes within tribes? That's a concept with more levels in it than Kramer's ski lodge apartment renovation. You may have just blown our mind, which is unfortunate because we'd just finished taping it back together again after watching *Inception*.

You do make a very valid point though. Mind you, the 'let's all unite' concept reminds us of that one episode in every cartoon where the protagonist and the antagonist (He-Man and Skeletor, the Turtles and Shredder or possibly even the Autobots and Decepticons) would pause their eternal battle to double-spear-tackle a third-party irritation trying to become the thug on their block.

Now, if memory serves, once this new threat was only half-dealt with, the antagonist went right back to their usual underhanded dickery.

Which is to say, yes, we're all one big gaming family when Dimension X opens, Castle Grayskull is threatened and our Energon Cubes are being stolen. But at the end of the day (or episode), any bastard who doesn't own a PS3 may just want to stab you in the back, steal your glory and do a really lame 'hey kids, don't pee on electric fences' PSA. Mind those individuals. Mind them well.

TOKEN EFFORT

In the July 09 of this magazine, Angry Sackboy wrote about exporting content from an old game to be played again in a new one.

He pondered over having *GT5* tracks and cars in *GT6*, and having *CoD4* maps in *MW2*. At the time, I thought it was an excellent idea. He mentioned the *LittleBigPlanet* and the *Rock Band* series and how they had embraced exportability. Being a big fan of the *Rock Band* series, I was very excited at the release of *Rock Band 3*, especially because of the ability to export previous *Rock Band* discs to play in it.

Unfortunately, I could not yet afford the expensive Pro Keyboard, so I went out and got *LEGO Rock Band*. It was on sale for only \$20, and I bought it thinking that I could just put those songs into *RB3* when I got it. \$20 is good value for 45 songs.

When I brought it home, I thought it would be a good idea to export it to *Rock Band 1*, so I could have all my songs in the one place. I had previously exported

the *AC/DC* track pack without problems, however I soon found that exporting *LEGO RB* would not be as easy. Rather than just giving me a PSN code in the manual like *AC/DC* did, I had to go to the *Rock Band* website to input the code that came with my new copy of *LEGO RB*, it then gave me 'token' to put into the PS Store, however when I tried this token, it said it was invalid. I went back to the *RB* website to see if I could get another token but it said my export code had already been redeemed.

I went to the *Rock Band* forums only to find a 25-page thread where people on PS3, 360 and people from all regions were having similar trouble. Even people that tried to export *RB2* had received the *LEGO RB* code by mistake. When I contacted technical support, they asked for a photo of my export code and a photo of my receipt, which I gave to them. More than a week later, still no response.

The whole process is a complete debacle. Is there another way around this that you guys (or the readers) know of?

Although the idea of exporting songs sounds like a good idea, when put into practice Harmonix has failed us. I hope Media Molecule does a better job in *LittleBigPlanet2*.

Xavier Murray, via email

Man, that sucks, Xavier. Unfortunately we don't have any loop holes for you at the moment (though we do love a good scam or shenanigan).

All we can offer you is to have a quiet word to EA on your behalf and to forward your letter on to Media Molecule as well – just in case they're thinking of using a similarly flawed system. Fingers crossed mate.

CYMBALISM

Dear OPS,

Ever since I bought a PS3 it's been fantastically good, loved every minute of my gaming time with it. But anyway, onto my main topic.

What is up with Harmonix's *Rock Band* drum controller? I'm a big fan of *Rock Band* because of the gameplay, the graphics and overall it's a very good music game.

But back to the drums: why doesn't the drum kit come with cymbals as standard? You either have to buy them online or go into a music shop and buy electric ones and fit them then play around with your kit yourself.

C'mon, nobody likes doing that! *Guitar Hero's* drum kit comes with cymbals as standard and they're the same price as the *Rock Band* ones. Do you think *Rock Band's* drum controller will ever come out with cymbals?

Jacob Kennedy, via email

Two *Rock Band* emails? Is it finally getting through it's awesome? There's a Pro Drum Kit available, but it's \$300 despite the great exchange rate.

Cuttings

► YE OLDE SCHOOL

Are PlayStation 2 games still being made?

Travis Kelly

via Facebook

The *SingStar* titles seem to be kicking on. Otherwise, there's not much else doing.

► A DICTATED DOCUMENT

I've got an Elder Scroll in my pants.

Benno Napier, via Facebook

We have two words for you.

Paper. Cuts.

► GETTIN' PUNCHY

Playa Hater of the year award goes to: anyone who rags on *GT5*. Congratulations haters, you won a punch to the neck.

Tiny Tim,

via Facebook

There do seem to be a lot of haters, huh. We're still digging it.

► NEED... OXYGEN

I, like, couldn't breathe when at the end of the *Uncharted 3* trailer "11-11, Uncover the truth" SO DAMN EPIC.

Alex Ostle,

via Facebook

Could not agree more. Building time machine as we speak. Have plutonium, searching classifieds for DeLorean. See page 54, bro.

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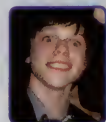
▼ Storefront

What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Stuart Pavlenko
Need for Speed Hot Pursuit

"I'm a big fan of the old ones, the speed of the game is what I love most: hammering down a straight at 340km/h is good, but hitting a corner at the same speed is better"



Xavier Johnson
The Saboteur

"\$45 for a solid game with not many glitches. Tops!"

Caption This ►

We also accept 'craptions' Have a go!

We don't really know if *PDC World Championship Darts: Pro Tour* will be released in Aus. We do know **David Brady** won't want it. Honestly, on a good day we can *make* a dart game with a kitchen knife



James Rossiter
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood

"Codex Edition. Why? It's awesome, enough said"



Steven Marshall
Call of Duty: Black Ops

"It's an obscure first person shooter set in the 60's! You might have not heard of it"



Darts: so boring they change the channel for you.

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John Marsden's iconic novel, *Tomorrow When the War Began*, has been turned into a ripping film. In it, a group of high-school students go camping during their holidays and come home to discover their tiny rural town has been invaded by a foreign army. It's the perfect place to launch an attack from the inside, and since the rest of the town has either been captured

or killed it's up to this bunch of teens to fight back. *Tomorrow* is surprisingly more violent and action-packed than you think, and ex-*Neighbours* star Caitlin Stasey is cracking in the lead role of Ellie.

Robert Downey, Jr. returns as the egotistical Tony Stark in *Iron Man 2*. Now his secret's out the U.S. wants him to relinquish the Iron Man tech lest it fall into the hands of their enemies. But, he has more life-threatening problems when Ivan Vanko, the son of his deceased father's business partner, tracks him down.

The boys from *South Park* are back in their 13th

series. It's still painfully funny, and highlight episodes from the 14 in this multi-disc set include 'Fatbeard' where Cartman and other boys join Somali pirates, 'Pinewood Derby' sees Randy and Stan trying to build a warp drive out of parts meant for a billy cart, while 'Eat, Pray, Queef' is probably best left undescribed.

All you have to do for a chance to win one of these excellent Blu-ray titles is subscribe to the magazine. You'll save 50 per cent off the cost of the mag and assured a copy of the mag for the next 12 months.

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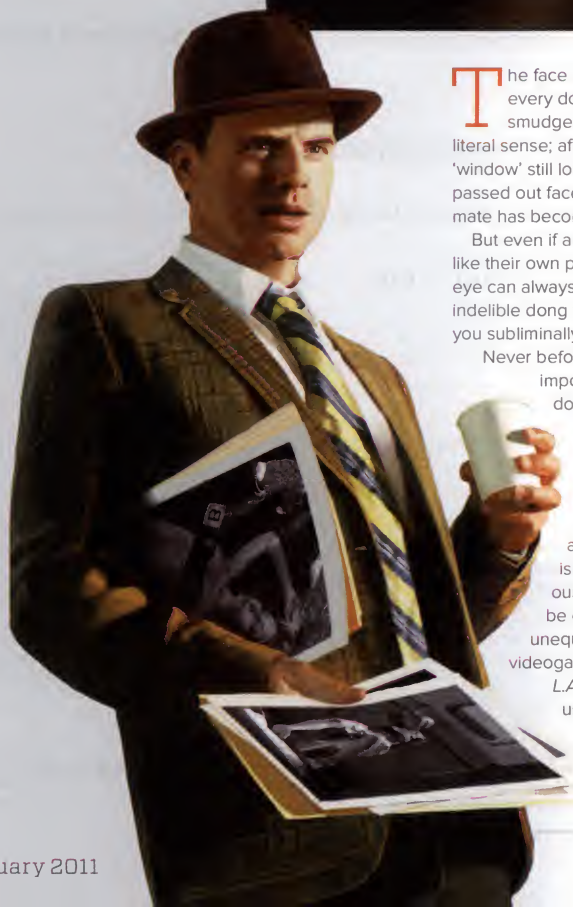
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L.A. Noire

Your eyeballs are about to cop it



The face is the window of the soul and every dodgy deed you do leaves a telltale smudge. Sometimes that happens in a literal sense; after a night of debauchery your 'window' still looks smashed because you've passed out face-down on a tennis racket or a mate has become 'penile Picasso' with a texta.

But even if a third-party hasn't used your face like their own personal Etch-A-Sketch, a sharp eye can always see through a facade of lies and indelible dong face-paint to read the truth that you subliminally emit.

Never before has that truism held such importance in a videogame as it does in *L.A. Noire*; a dark, violent detective thriller set against the seedy backdrop of post-war Los Angeles in the late 1940s.

Along with Rockstar's signature attention to atmosphere and the fact the game is being fashioned into life out of our own backyard, this title should be on your radar because it is the unequivocal king of life-like acting in a videogame.

L.A. Noire's trump card is that is using groundbreaking performance capture technology called MotionScan. Through it, Team Bondi will allow you to analyse every subtle nuance

of an actor's performance, which ties in superbly with the idea of being a detective snooping for clues in the most corrupt and violent period in "HelL.A.'s" history. It's important to note that the heinous crimes you'll undertake in the game are actually drawn from real life cases. They'd have to ship *L.A. Noire* with a bag of sand to make it more grittier than it is.

1947 Los Angeles is quite a fascinating time period for Team Bondi to focus on. At the tail-end of the '40s L.A. was in the middle of a massive economic boom and the world at large was just beginning to be suckered into the romance of Hollywood's Golden Age. As the Chili Peppers might put it, this was the bloody birth of Californication. Amidst all the glitz, hardened WWII veterans were returning from the service and had to scramble to re-integrate into a very different society to the one they had left behind. Needless to say, this city of angels soon had a river of dirty money, corruption and murder churning beneath its glossy veneer.

L.A. Noire slides you into the gumshoes of Cole Phelps, a decorated war vet who has been awarded the Silver Star for bravery at the battle of Okinawa (a.k.a the bloodiest battle of WWII). Figuring he's a guy who has the minerals when the chips are down, the LAPD hire him as a patrolman and it's up to you to help Cole rise through the ranks. To do this you'll need to undertake an escalating series of cases and investigations that will eventually move you off



Bekowsky couldn't drive for crap.
Hence our use of blank plates



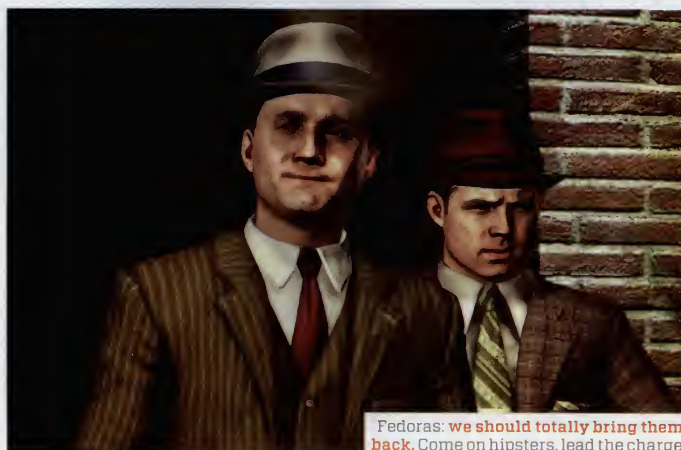
the street as a 'beat cop' and onto the various 'detective desks' in your precinct. However, with each self-contained case solved and rung on the ladder climbed, Cole takes one step closer to discovering the true puppet masters pulling the strings in this dark lala land. Pretty soon he's going to become entangled in events that are well over his pay-grade and his bitchin' fedora.

Our demo opens with a case from the traffic desk, where – in another classic cop drama trope – he's partnered with a loveable Pole (in this case: Steve Bekowsky). According to HQ, two dames – aging starlet June Ballard and doe-eyed wannabe Jessica Hamilton – have careened their convertible off an escarpment and smashed into a Coca Cola billboard. Given that Coke in those days probably still featured cocaine as an ingredient, one can imagine their enthusiasm to get closer to the product. But even still, there's something fishy about this Thelma and Louise stunt.

Rather than being the burrito we had for lunch, our intense gut feeling turns out to be pure intuition; both occupants were drugged. Walking up to the crash scene cues in a jazz tune, which is *L.A. Noire's* way of saying: "there are clues afoot". Sure enough our preliminary snooping reveals a bunch of suspicious items; a movie prop that has been used to wedge down the accelerator, and the younger occupant is hiding a very suspicious diary and some torn underpants in her handbag.

Shoot down to the local

L.A. Noire is currently the largest videogame undertaking ever developed in Oz. Team Bondi was originally an independent developer led by Brendan McNamara, the former Director of Development for Sony Computer Entertainment's Team Soho Studio in London and the writer and director of *The Getaway*. Originally a direct competitor to the *GTA* franchise, *The Getaway* went on to sell over 4 million units on the PS2 console.



Fedoras: we should totally bring them back. Come on hipsters, lead the charge

The Pitch

An open-world noir detective thriller set during the bloodiest time in L.A.'s history.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION-ADVENTURE

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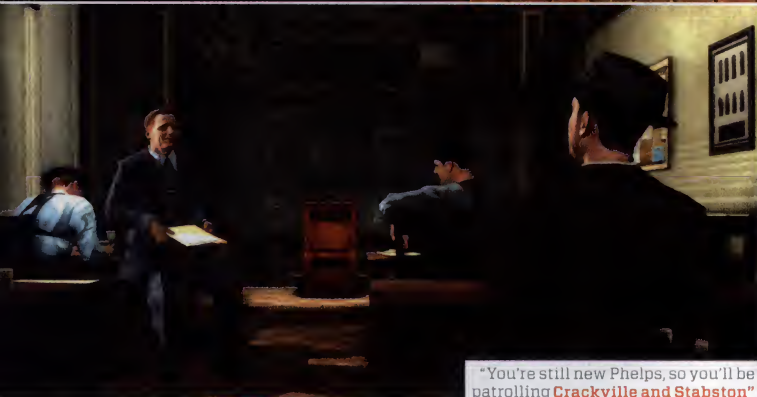
APRIL 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR

DEVELOPER: TEAM BONDI

PLAYERS: 1

"What you've just noticed to your left is our **notice board**. Clearly it still works"



"Play our song again, Sam" "Yes sir...
DING. DONG. THE WITCH IS DEAD!"



"You're still new Phelps, so you'll be patrolling **Crackville and Stabston**"

"Once you get an inkling as to a lie or a some other fact omission you can choose how to respond"

Climbing back up to the top of the hill, we decide to interview the elder occupant, June Ballard. At this point, the true magic of *L.A. Noire* begins.

Correctly handling an interrogation is a fundamental facet of this detective thriller. The amazingly life-like faces, body language and expressions mean a lot: what are they subliminally giving away? Is that a nervous twitch or a guilty quaver in their voice? MotionScan and its ability to fully capture a real-life actor's performance allows you to pick at these minute details for analysis.

Once you get an inkling as to a lie or a some other fact omission you can choose how to respond in order to milk out some more information. In this instance, Ballard is a well-known mob moll and she immediately tries to point the finger at a local movie producer Mark Bishop. With every statement she makes Cole has the option to either 'believe', 'force', or 'accuse' her responses.

The first option requires little effort, but the other two will require you to go into your trusty notepad to produce proof that will backup your accusations. Watching the scene is an

absolute shock to the eyeballs when you see MotionScan for the first time and we imagine it's going to be difficult going back to hand animated lip-synch after playing through the finished product.

We decide to leave the crime scene and take a car ride through another core component of *L.A. Noire*; the city itself. This sprawling metropolis is an absolutely gorgeous recreation of late-'40s L.A. and is bristling with the sort of minute attention to detail and era accuracy that is crucial to any open-world period piece such as this. Whether it's election posters and trolley wires criss-crossing above the street; classic cars cruising past; or the authentic sign post traffic lights, there is an undeniable verisimilitude laced through *L.A. Noire*. Much like the taxi feature in *GTA IV* you can ask your partner to drive in order to quick-travel to your destinations, but with this sort of living, breathing world at your fingertips it's hard to imagine why you'd want to.

We rock up at the local hospital and decide to talk with the younger victim, Jessica Hamilton, in an attempt to find some discrepancies between her testimony and June's. Jessica is clearly just a naïve hopeful who has waded in well past her depth and, in stark contrast to our last interrogation, the approach Cole uses is all 'good cop'.

She also mentions movie producer Mark Bishop in her testimony, and a warehouse 'audition' that, unsurprisingly, she can only half remember when one of Bishop's lackeys offered her a drink.

Once again we're marvelled by not only the power of the MotionScan tech, but also that of the actors. Clearly, Team Bondi has spared no expense in locating quality acting talent, and even with our own rudimentary knowledge of poker faces and emotional tells, we can spot a few signs of fibbing. What's surprising is that *L.A. Noire* doesn't prompt you much in this regard at all. Even still, the mission we're playing take place at an indeterminate time in the middle of the game, we imagine there's a tutorial that better familiarises you on the finer points of picking up when someone's pants are slightly on fire.

We leave Jessica and decide to tail June Ballard instead – the old broad seemed pretty ticked off about what happened, and we have a hunch that she'll try to use her mafia contacts to get revenge on Bishop. What follows is your typical 'drive behind the other car, but don't get too close' style mission. Full disclosure: we did manage to run down a few pedestrians and lamp posts – but that was just see if the Euphoria engine was still functioning as it should. It was in fine ragdoll form. ▶

Tools of the trade

Back before the invention of iPads, people used regular pads (and something called a 'pencil'). Alongside his standard issue gat, Cole Phelps's police notepad is one of the greatest tools you have in *L.A. Noire*. Every time you discover a clue, or learn of a new person of interest it'll get automatically scrawled into your pad along with locations, details of the case you're working on and even a neat little sketch of suspects. But most important of all, you can whip your notepad out during interrogations to pick the holes in a suspects story. You can even glance up from your notepad to see how they're handling the conversation. Psyche-out tactics, ahoy.

"This sprawling metropolis is an **absolutely gorgeous** recreation of late-40s L.A."

What's a MotionScan?

MotionScan's the 3D motion-capture system powering Rockstar's Team Bondi game and according to Team Bondi founder and director, Brendan MacNamara it "allows [us] to immerse audiences in the most minute details of L.A. Noire's interactive experience."

MotionScan uses 32 High Definition cameras to capture three-dimensional performances at up to 30 frames per second, and is capable of capturing up to 50 minutes of final footage and processing up to 20 minutes of facial animation a day.

The end result is a performance that recreates "emotional detail, mannerism, and facial nuance". Say goodbye to dodgy lip-synch.

Sure enough, June pulls up to a diner and storms inside to use the payphone. We follow her at a safe distance and slide into a nearby booth with a paper. As June spits venom into the receiver we pan the camera around and are mightily impressed with the interior environment. There's a low haze of volumetric cigarette smoke in the air, some perfect 'noir lighting' going on and we're shocked to see that every NPC in the place is wearing the face of a real-life actor. We snap back to attention when June tells Bishop's address to her mysterious crime boss benefactor.

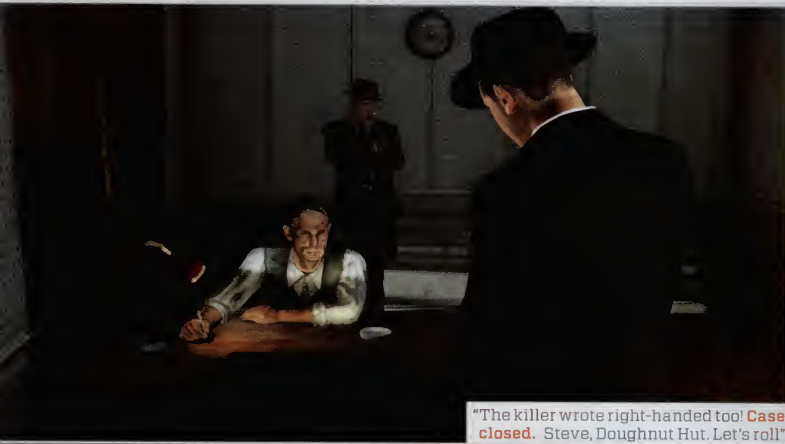
In the interest of avoiding spoilers, we won't reveal the solution to the case. Instead we'll highlight the action sections that took place. The first shenanigan involved reaching a witness before some goons

could get there first. Burning down the street in our state-of-the-art Chevrolet felt like something out of the movies. As the ride disintegrates and is peppered with bullet holes; Bekowsky leans out and unloads his piece at our pursuers. Once again, we have to strong-arm our way through traffic and a few looky-loos don't get out of the way quick enough. Whoops.

Though the car we're in was a beast in the 1940s it feels a bit more sedate than we're used to. Those of you going in with the expectation of Coquettes and Infernuses (Inferni?) may have a small period of adjustment ahead of you. But for what it lacks in horsepower, our ride more than makes up for with its ability to be a battering ram. Tapping into that, we decide to tap into our enemies and send them cart-wheeling down the street in satisfying Hollywood fashion. Phelps calmly tells HQ to send a meat wagon to their location and we wheel off to fight more crime.

Much later on we get to see what Cole is like with a heater in his hand. Given his WWII experience, it's not surprising that he's something of a crackshot and a firm proponent of cover tactics. Our shootout takes place in a massive disused movie set and the surrounding scaffolds are lousy with gun-totting goons who are dead-eyed enough to blast off our fedora when we're blind-firing at them. Sadly, there's no Indiana Jones 'I must be with my sweet hat at all costs' mechanic in place here. There's still time to implement it,

"She had a body that could melt a grilled cheese sandwich from across the room"



"Witnesses say white male, moustache, about 6'3" "Awfully big moustache"

"The killer wrote right-handed too! **Case closed.** Steve, Doughnut Hut. Let's roll!"



"The scene felt all wrong. Like someone had placed **a caption over my junk**"

"*L.A. Noire* is a noticeable departure from **what Rockstar's core audience** is familiar with"

Team Bondi. You know you want to.

From what we could tell there is a target lock-on mechanic in place here, but it is nowhere near as overly-helpful as the system seen in the *GTA* titles. At a medium range you can lock to primary mass on an enemy, but your aiming reticle needs to be pretty close to the mark to begin with. Distance shots are something else entirely. After scooping up an M1 Garand we had to take our time with the free-aim to cap some pesky sharpshooters. We took some hits during the exchange and also noticed that *L.A. Noire* is sporting a regenerative health system that bleeds out the screen to black and white as you take damage. Given the pervading 'old

movie' tone of the subject matter, it's actually a pretty classy way to die.

All told, we stumbled away from our brief look at *L.A. Noire* with nothing but good impressions. Sure we were left with one or two questions – like what happens when you screw up an interrogation – but otherwise this game is looking top-shelf amazing. The implementation of MotionScan is truly game-changing and it really is something that you need to see in the flesh (so to speak) before you can believe it. Any negative thoughts we had going in of 'next-gen, crappy FMV', were quickly disproven too. As we mentioned before, Team Bondi has hired some great talent and in terms of believable dialogue the crew has clearly done their homework.

The only concern we have at this point (if you could call it as such) is that the slower-paced, considered tone in *L.A. Noire* is a noticeable departure from what Rockstar's core audience is familiar with. This is a mature, gritty thriller that doesn't crowbar in violence and action for the sake of violence and action.

That said, at this stage it's anyone's guess as to what the ratio of 'yackety-yack' to 'pew-pew' is, so the ADD action-junkies shouldn't start upping their Ritalin dosage just yet. Truth be told, we have a hunch that this exciting new IP has game of the year potential written all over its face. Make plans to take this into custody.

Adam Mathew

They Say

"A sophisticated noir narrative set amidst a meticulously recreated and authentic open-world backdrop. *L.A. Noire* is set to blur the lines between movie and videogame"

We Say

Even after the briefest of demos we were left utterly enthralled with the murderous, conspiracies unfolding around Cole Phelps. We can't wait to see more.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING



A convertible not being driven by a fat balding man? **Rare**



Test Drive Unlimited 2

Paradise by the dashboard light

You may not have played the original *Test Drive Unlimited* on PS2. We don't blame you. It was an excellent game, no doubt, but its release date of March 16, 2007 probably didn't do it any favours. Just one week later, on March 23, the PS3 launched in Australia and PS2s around the country suddenly vanished from the spot beneath the TV they'd called home for so many years, leaving nought but a dust-free rectangle.

Poor timing, then.

Those of you who did play it, though, may fondly recall the incredible sense of size and freedom that came with it. *Test Drive Unlimited*'s Oahu was a gigantic tropical expanse covered in flat-out freeways, twisting mountain passes and city streets. Cruising out of Honolulu, past Pearl Harbor and subsequently burying it for a high speed burn through the small towns and pineapple plantations that dotted the centre of the island was a simultaneously relaxing and exhilarating experience. With the windows down you could practically feel your elbow beginning to sizzle under the scorching Hawaiian sun. *Test Drive Unlimited* junkies could be identified by the faraway look in their eyes and their glowing red trucker's arms.

Despite its arcade-like handling there was something about it that captured the

spirit of driving for the sake of driving. The racing itself often came second for us and, for a racing game, that was pretty unique.

Three years down the track and *Test Drive Unlimited 2*, a sequel we've long awaited, seeks to recapture all those things that made the original special. The good news is it looks like it's succeeding.

We've been able to spend the last few weeks with the latest preview build of

TDU2 which, save for a few sound bugs and some dropped frames, seems a bee's dick from completion.

The first thing we noted was the improved handling model. The original *Test Drive Unlimited* ran on Eden's ageing in-house driving model (the one used in the *V-Rally* series) that has its origins back to the late Jurassic period. *TDU2*'s driving model has been rebuilt from scratch.

The Pitch

Two massive tropical islands, 100+ expensive cars, 3000+ kilometres of road to conquer

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

EXPECTED RELEASE:

FEBRUARY 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: EDEN GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-8



Its tyres may explode at 437 km/h. **Along with your genitals**

Not pictured: a car we'll actually buy in this game

"Unlock the ability to fly back to Oahu, Hawaii and **experience the freak state** all over again"

The coolest cars are driven by the **douchebags**: fact



Car photography 101: **you must have** that wheel turned



The horror

We reviewed the original *Test Drive Unlimited* way back in issue #2, which is almost four years ago. Rumours of a sequel began almost the minute the first one hit shelves but it's taken a long time to arrive. The main culprit is likely the *Alone in the Dark* title Eden was tasked to build back in 2008 (which arrived to a somewhat lukewarm – and slightly scandalous – reception). Happily for Eden, however, in the four years since *Test Drive Unlimited* nobody has taken the MMO racing game and raised the bar, leaving *TDU2* free to continue the work its predecessor started.

The similarities between the two are evident, and the game still sways heavily towards the arcade end of the spectrum (even with all the driving aids deactivated), but suddenly there's a bite to the physics model that wasn't there before. Better yet, when that grip gives way it's easier to drift around tight 90-degree corners than before. We found the handling to be both accessible and satisfying.

The adjustment to the feel of the cars, however, is only one part of a huge slate of changes made to this ambitious sequel.

Progression through *TDU2* has now been geared towards the four ways people played the original. Rather than your progress through the game be entirely dependant on winning race events, the levelling system in *TDU2* is instead based around championships, discovery, social and collection.

You can easily boost your rank, for instance, by competing in (and winning) races.

However, simply exploring the environment and cruising around will also boost your rank as you'll receive points for driving on certain percentages of the amount of roads in a given zone. You can also discover hidden packages in the form of rusty old car wrecks, plus there are photography challenges that involve the in-game scenery.

You'll also get points for hitting key social and collection milestones. Making friends and buying property was already a part of *Test Drive Unlimited*, but now it's all built into the very fabric of the game.

The highest rank is 60, but you only have to get to level 10 to unlock the ability to fly back to Oahu, Hawaii and experience the freak state all over again. Amazingly *TDU2* is like two games in one. Just when you're beginning to comes to terms with just how large a playground Ibiza is Eden allows you to go and muck about in the old one. *That's* value for money.

“Eden has assembled a **comprehensive cross-section** of the world’s most elite autos”

The Oahu race around Mt. Wanhockaloogie was rad

Oahu’s been rebuilt to make use of the game’s new day and night cycle and wet weather system, and it’s also been stuffed with a host of new buildings, shops, races and unsealed roads for rallying. It feels very familiar but it’s far easier on the eye.

Not to cast dispersions on the otherwise fine work Eden has done digitising Ibiza, but the larger Oahu is still the more interesting island and we get the feeling more players will gravitate back to it and stay there. We know we will, at any rate.

TDU2 begins not unlike the original – you choose an avatar from a selection of impossibly beautiful rich people and hit the road. The twist in *TDU2*, however, is that soon after we chose a character and were given the keys to a brand new Ferrari California we were awoken to realise it was all a dream. Cruising down the open road putting the roof up and down (the game features functional convertibles) we were snapped back to reality by a harsh rapping on the driver’s side window.

You’re actually a valet; a valet who instead of being fired for sleeping on the job inside the boss’s new Fezza is instead entered into a

bizarrely legal and (naturally) televised street racing contest called Solar Crown.

The new story-driven career mode has the potential to divide, especially with its large cast of awful people. All the characters we’ve met so far are Americans, which is odd considering we expected Ibiza to be full of Spaniards and bright-pink British backpackers. They also do stupid things like paint their cars like a six-year-old might paint his BMX, plastering them with flames and their first names in giant block letters. It’s jarringly silly for a game that is as sexy as this.

Still, the only cast anyone’s really interested in will be the cars and, from what we’ve seen, we’re impressed with the roster. Eden has assembled a comprehensive cross-section of the world’s most elite autos.

Ferrari returns after its absence from the PS2 version of *Test Drive Unlimited* and has seen fit to let us look up the skirts of no less than 11 different models, including the new 458 Italia. *TDU2* also features the Bugatti Veyron Super Sport – officially the fastest production car in the world today. This is a car that’s been electronically limited to 415km/h

“The new story-driven career mode has the potential to divide, especially with its **large cast of awful people**”

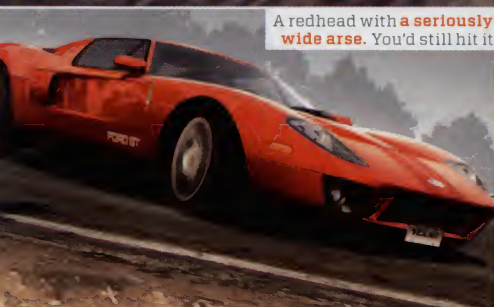


We haven’t seen a rim job this **fully sick** since... nevermind

Holden? Let go

The Holden Efijy, a concept car created in Australia by Holden a few years back, made its one and only appearance in digital form as DLC for the Xbox 360 version of *Test Drive Unlimited* back in 2007. Based around the iconic Holden FJ, the second car built by Holden, and running on a supercharged, 6.0 litre V8 producing 480 kW (644 hp) the Efijy was described as “probably the most beautiful concept car ever” when it was named Hot Rod of the Year by *Hot Rod* magazine in the US. Will it return for the

sequel? We’ve been told it won’t (and that including it the first time around already proved difficult enough). A shame.



A redhead with a **seriously wide arse**. You'd still hit it



Best of luck **winning races** in this acursed thing



TDU 2 license plates? **Fourth wall**: destroyed

because if Bugatti let their customers drive it any faster the tyres would literally explode and Europe's most cashed-up douchebags would be turned into long red streaks of mince on Germany's autobahns.

We're not sure if there are any roads on either Ibiza or Oahu that you could do 400 or so km/h on – but if there are we'll be sure to let you know. A game of chicken at a closing speed of 800km/h anyone? We're keen.

Pleasingly, a number of popular marques that were criminally absent from *GT5* also feature, including Koenigsegg, Ariel, Gumpert and Ascari. Eden has done a top notch job of assembling a roster of the world's most desirable supercars.

The visual detail in the cars is admirable. The interiors aren't as remarkable as the premium car models in *GT5*, although *TDU2* has a few tricks up its sleeve. Watching the roof go up and down on a convertible, for instance, is pretty damn cool. You can walk around garages and showrooms in first-person view now too, so you can inspect the cars close-up – opening doors, climbing into the cabins and such.

The first car we purchased was a Lancia Delta Integrale, after being offered a choice between it, a Lotus Esprit and a Ford Mustang. The Mustang had charm but the Integrale had acceleration and handling. Charm isn't a measurable force that keeps your car on the road. We wrapped the first block of challenges and got coerced into earning ourselves an off

road license in order to compete in the dirt-based challenges. After that the game began to consistently badger us to go and buy a B class vehicle – one that could be driven on the rough stuff.

Why our rally-bred Integrale wasn't suitable we're not sure, but we hit the road and carved a path towards a faraway dealership that promised Range Rovers.

The dealer did have a Range Rover handy but it also had a number of supercars on standby. You can test drive any car, regardless of whether you can afford it or not. The Ascaris were asking around \$600,000 but you can pick up an Ariel Atom for a tenth of that price.

The Atom is little but a collection of tubes on wheels, with a seat. This explains the low price. What's also low, however, is weight. The Atom accelerates like a burning badger. We instantly purchased one and spent a whole afternoon tearing around at full stick – from one side of Ibiza to the other.

That's when the beauty of the *Test Drive Unlimited* concept truly began flooding back. *TDU2* has a lot of new and returning features, but ultimately it doesn't appear to have lost the spirit of the original.

We await the keys to the finished product any day now. **Luke Reilly**

They Say

"*Test Drive Unlimited 2* puts the world's most desirable vehicles in players' hands. These ultra-limited edition masterpieces are flawlessly replicated with Eden's finely tuned driving technology"

We Say

Could become the king of open-world racers. Plus, it's like two games in one. Bring it on.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

Dangerous as all hell, but it beats the hell out of Cityrail!

Bioshock Infinite

Excuse me, while I kiss the sky

The Pitch

The general thematic vibe of *BioShock* set in uncharted 1912 Americana

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

EXPECTED RELEASE: 2012

DISTRIBUTOR: 2K

DEVELOPER: IRRATIONAL GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

Fact: this isn't a direct sequel to *BioShock* or *BioShock 2* in terms of story, but *BioShock Infinite* is a thematic successor. The action's evolved, but it's *Infinite*'s strong story that should sucker you in.

It's the early 1900s and the city of Columbia was constructed at a time of significant industrial advances. The city's been built on huge balloons in order to travel the world to show off the might of America, from its technological capabilities to the values of the nation. It was a time of great hope as America reinvents itself a few decades after the ravages of Civil War.

But it all went wrong. The city was massively armed and after an (as yet) unspecified international incident Columbia disappears into the clouds.

So where do you fit into this? You are Booker DeWitt, a private investigator, former Pinkerton agent and strikebreaker. He's a man who knows how to get things done whether it's legal or not.

DeWitt's been approached by a mysterious man who wants him to find a young woman called Elizabeth who was kidnapped 15 years ago and has been held hostage ever since. Problem is she's on Columbia, but DeWitt's client knows where the city is.

Columbia is a city in a permanent, twisted state where every day is like the 4th of July with banners and streamers – it's bright, colourful and full of pride, but

taken to extreme lengths. The illusion of happiness masks something sinister as the city is tearing itself apart under posters of propaganda and terrifying eugenics.

DeWitt lands on Columbia in 1912 to find two groups of citizens at war with each other, as explosions and gunfire rock parts of the floating metropolis. The current ruling party has a zealous dedication to God and country and wants to keep Columbia in its current state. Their posters dotted around the city promote keeping foreigners out of their paradise – slogans such as "Arm thyself against foreigners and anarchists!" and "It is our holy duty to guard against foreign hordes" are commonplace.

On the other side there's a resistance group named Vox Populi that are determined to clean the city of its xenophobia and radical nationalism. However, they're ready to blow the Columbia out of the sky to achieve this.

It's not long before you twig that Elizabeth is at the centre of the city's conflict, and the goal quickly shifts from finding her to escaping the city together

– alive. She's far from helpless though and is integral to your survival. DeWitt can wield shotguns and other weapons, as well as vigors, the plasmid-like powers – we know of Murder of Crows (that sends a swarm of the birds straight at a foe) and the familiar lightning bolt and telekinesis – but Elizabeth's powers are incredible as she can call a storm to fry a horde of citizens, and also bring entire buildings to the ground.

The problem is that every time she's called on to use them she gets hurt, doubling up in pain with blood dripping from her nostrils. You're meant to be her saviour, so it's imperative that you don't abuse her powers and kill her in the process. Plus, Columbia's two factions want Elizabeth for their own purposes – she's obviously a powerful ally.

Then there are the Alphas, also known as Handymen. Giant, moustachioed mechanical men with real hearts, designed to protect the city. They're after Elizabeth, whether to capture or kill her, so both DeWitt and Elizabeth need to work

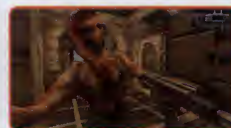
So who is Ken Levine?

Ken Levine's responsible for a few landmark titles, most of them on PC. *BioShock* was the first game of his to appear on a PlayStation console.



Thief: The Dark Project
PC 1998

This really hit upon the 'stealth' vibe that was going on at the time. Levine was a writer and designer, and it made a big impact spawning three sequels.



System Shock 2
PC 1999

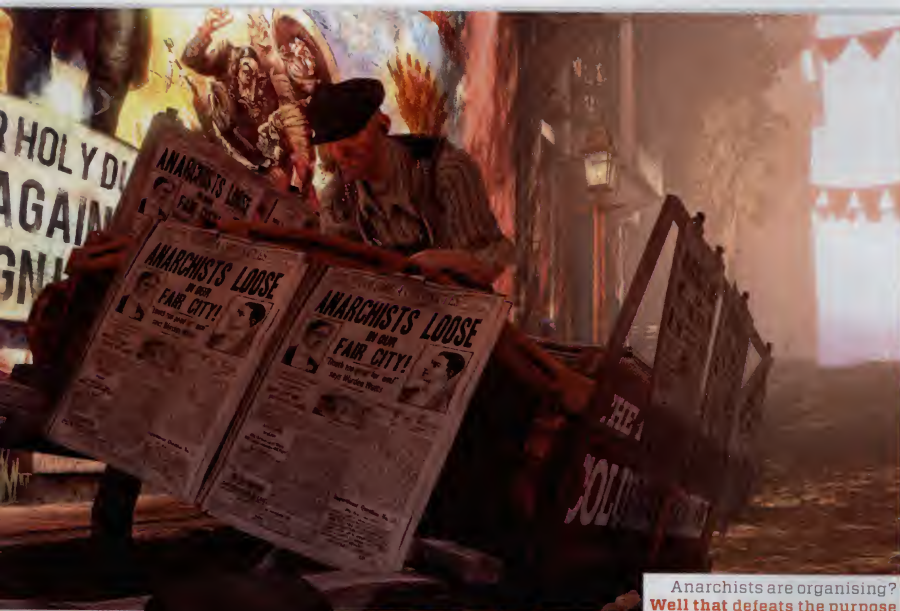
This cyberpunk shooter was set on a ship in the far future where you had to use psionic powers and pick up audio logs to figure out the story. Sound familiar?



BioShock
PS3 2008

The 'spiritual successor' to *System Shock 2*. Eerie shooter that boldly eschewed a multiplayer component and focused on a gripping story. It worked. Get it.





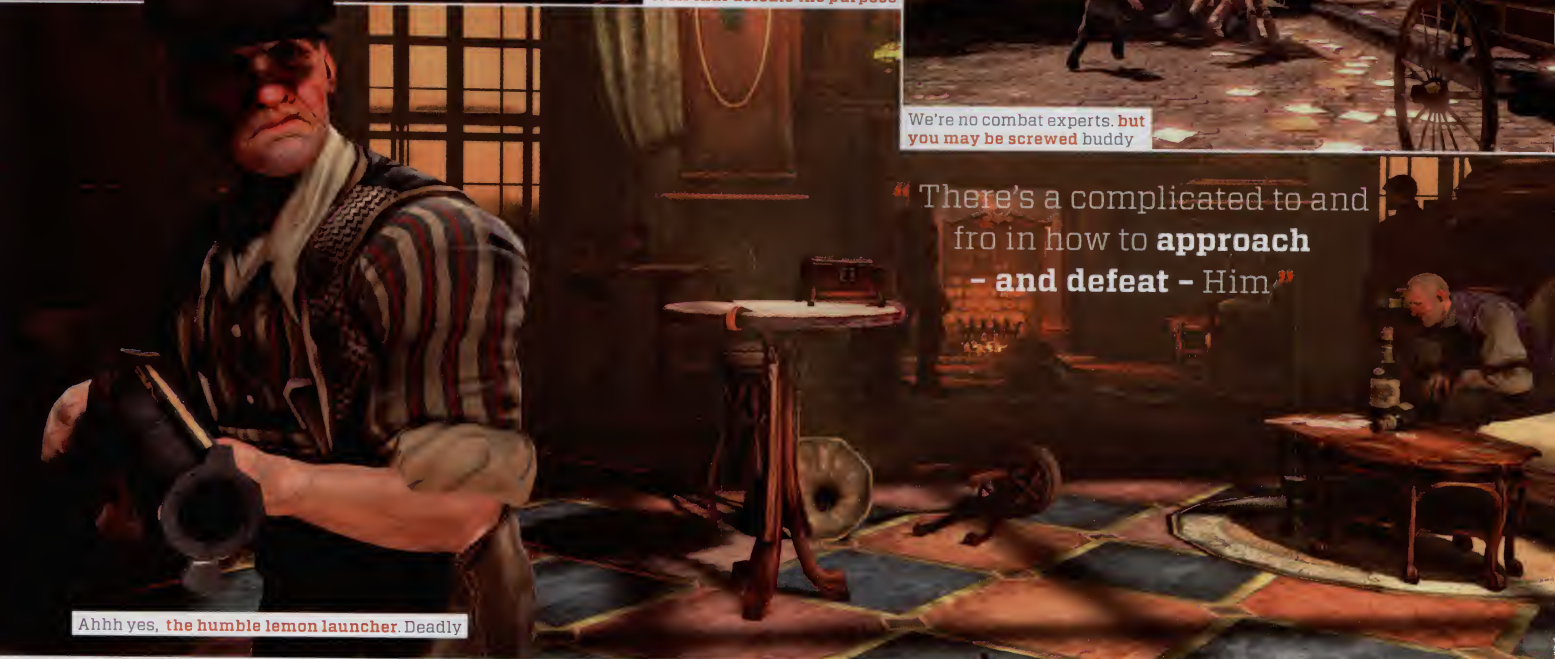
Anarchists are organising?
Well that defeats the purpose



We pity the people living
under the sewerage plant



We're no combat experts, but
you may be screwed buddy



"There's a complicated to and
fro in how to **approach**
- and defeat - Him"

Ahhh yes, the humble lemon launcher. Deadly

together to defeat them.

This is just one example of the bond DeWitt and Elizabeth share. Further on you meet 'Him', a giant winged creature that is captor, protector and friend of Elizabeth's. Him's the one that kept her locked away for years, and he doesn't take kindly to DeWitt's attempts to remove Elizabeth from Columbia. Of course, while he's one reason she's stuck in the city he's also the reason she's still alive, so there's a complicated to and fro in how to approach – and defeat – Him. DeWitt's going to need more than a few squirts of lightning to defeat this winged goliath, but he has to be wary of the established connection Elizabeth and Him share.

Taking to the skies also opens up the combat opportunities as you're not restricted by corridors and tonnes of water threatening to break through the glass, and also because Columbia has a system of skylines. This transport system links the bobbing islands together and the residents use them to get around with a hook they hold in their hand. You can also leap between them and use their height advantage to your benefit. They're damn quick though, so you need to adapt your usual on-ground tactics.

Both of Levine's creations have differences and similarities – kind of like how each *Final*

Fantasy games have their own self-contained adventures and universes. *BioShock* was essentially about the purity of man working towards his own ideals and being the best he could without interference from government or the church.

In *Infinite*, it's about the science of being better than other people – eugenics – trying to erase perceived defects by breeding certain groups and ethnicities out of existence. The former is set in a city in the depths of the ocean versus one in the clouds. Murky gloom and extreme colour. A protagonist who only discovered himself as the game progressed versus one with a name and history.

Yet there are many similarities too. Rapture's citizens were dressed up to celebrate New Year's Eve 1959, while Columbia's July 4th, 1912 vibe permeates the game. Both days are meant as celebrations but, well, it's clear they've both become nightmares in their respective locations. And then there are vigors and plasmids, over-protective father figures and morality issues about using people for your own nefarious ends.

This is how we talk about *BioShock*; as a system of ideas and themes, but the action ought to provide genuine thrills. 2012 never seemed so far away. **Paul Taylor**

They Say

"No sacred cows. This game is both true to what people love about the series and unafraid to question every assumption"

We Say

It's spiritually the same as *BioShock*, and we love the team's devotion to narrative and good shooting mechanics – Infinite promises just that.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

Alice: Madness Returns

Read the directions and directly you will be directed in the right direction

The Pitch

An adult take on *Alice in Wonderland* as our heroine battles her own psychoses as she deals with manifestations of her inner demons.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ADVENTURE

EXPECTED RELEASE:

TBC 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER: SPICY HORSE

PLAYERS: 1

There's no denying that we're big fans of the female form here at *OPS*, and are well familiar with the hotness/crazy scale. For those not in the know, the searing hotness of any particular young lass in question directly corresponds to her overall level of craziness. Hey, we don't make the rules, we just try to live by them. This scale has never been more evident than in the warping of Alice (of Wonderland) in *Alice: Madness Returns*.

For those not versed with developer American McGee's portfolio (see 'Born in the USA') in 2000 McGee brought his deliciously demented take on this iconic story to PC (a PlayStation 2 port was also in development but was cancelled). His action-filled adventure told the tale of young Alice who, after witnessing the horrifying demise of her parents in a tragic fire, retreats into her subconscious to protect the last shattered shards of her sanity. In doing so she finds herself retreating from reality rather than facing the truth and delves deep down the rabbit hole into Wonderland.

After triumphantly battling her demons she awakes within a London psychiatric ward and thus begins our journey with Alice in this sequel, *Madness Returns*.

American McGee's *Alice* is known for three solid gaming concepts; strong story, precarious platforming and puzzling combat. Each plot device is littered with twists and turns, each enemy a Rubik's cube that needs to be tested, prodded and probed for weaknesses, and every new arena a puzzle that needs to be cracked and solved to be traversed.

The world he creates is lavish, though warped to say the least, with Lewis Carroll's creations

twisted into aggressive, nightmarish versions that would like nothing better than to separate your head from your shoulders.

Released under the watchful eye of her psychiatrist, Alice finds London a bleak and dreary place, devoid of colour and life, mirroring her own tragic existence. When she retreats to Wonderland once more, the world bursts forth with vibrant colour, distancing itself markedly from her bleaker reality. Though a frightening and scary place, Alice becomes an idealised version of herself: beautiful, capable, confident and bearing more than a passing similarity to Christina Ricci.

Alice is armed with four unique weapons, including the Vorpall Blade from the original, the Pepper Grinder (which appears to operate like a chaingun) and the mysterious Tea Pot and Hobby Horse. With these she must negotiate her way from the Mad Hatter's lair through Wonderland as she re-encounters former allies, now adversaries, and pieces together both the route home and the tattered remnants of her sanity.

"Every enemy is a puzzle," says McGee. Players will have to work out the weaknesses of each opponent.

Many have tried to put their own slant onto a much-loved fairytale to videogame adaptation before and failed dismally. It's either too cutesy with not enough bite or distances itself so far from the original that it barely resembles its inspiration. We think that American McGee's past success on PC (the dismal reception of his 2006 game *Bad Day LA* notwithstanding) will lead to a definitive and memorable Wonderland experience on console. We're looking forward to following the white rabbit to see what else is revealed. **Dave**

Kozicki

Born in the USA

Sporting a name so patriotic it makes Bruce Springsteen look like a flag burner, the question American McGee gets most is whether 'American' really is his first name. McGee's answer: "Yes, my mother named me that. She claims a woman she knew in college, who named her daughter 'America', inspired the name. She also tells me that she was thinking of naming me 'Obnard'. She was and always has been a very eccentric and creative person. No, I do not have any nicknames."

Alice isn't exactly flabby but she sure is stabby

They Say

"At its core is the idea of going mad, coming into this environment that would normally be her sanctuary, her psychological sanctuary, and screwing everything up. That's really at the centre of this"

We Say

We're totally down with a blood-drenched dip. Let's see how far this rabbit hole goes

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

"The game's macabre but with lashings of punk rock infused within it"

Yes, it is a sweet jacket but your visual priorities are out of whack

Shadows of the Damned

A hell of a good time

The Pitch

The mechanics of *Resident Evil 4* and the crazy crap from a man with a number in his name.

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: ACTION

EXPECTED RELEASE: TBA

DISTRIBUTOR: EA

DEVELOPER:

GRASSHOPPER

MANUFACTURE

PLAYERS: 1-TBA

This third-person action title is set in Hell, as Garcia Hotspur – a professional demon hunter – dedicates his life to searching for his girlfriend after she's taken to the underworld by legions of the damned. He's determined to bring her back and also wreak his own vengeance on Hell. Well done for making it this far into one of the most generic plots in the history of videogames.

The kick is *Shadows of the Damned* is being developed by *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami, and legendary Japanese developer Suda51, a.k.a. Goichi Suda. Plus, the music's by Akira Yamaoka, the chap who crafted the bum-tensing soundtrack for *Silent Hill*. It's an impressive collaboration of Japan's creative elite.

This star billing behind games have been happening slowly over the last few years: there are games being made where the personalities behind it either make the game more interesting than the premise itself, or lift it beyond usual expectations. It's like if you heard there was

an action movie being made about a comic book character, but then you found out it was Christopher Nolan directing it, or that Clint Eastwood was behind a coming of age story of a boy turning into a man.

Shinji Mikami directed *Resident Evil 4*, generally regarded as one of the best and most innovative *Resi* titles around. It's still immensely playable, and *Shadows* liberally borrows from the tight, off-centre over the shoulder camera from *Resi 4*. The mechanics are Mikami's doing, while Suda51 is creatively responsible for the style. He's previously described the game as being a 'psychological action thriller', and determined to make something that's going to be different than anything that's come before it. Suda51's also known as the bloke behind the very weird *Killer7* that appeared on PS2 – both he and Mikami worked on that as well.

The game's macabre but with lashings of punk rock infused within it. Hotspur is covered in tattoos, and they snake out of the collar of his leather jacket. His compatriot into the depths of this unique hell is a flaming skull who transforms into various weapons. So, when Hotspur wields a shotgun, it's a boomstick with the front part of a skull strapped onto its tip.

So, style over substance? We don't think so. Mikami's other credits include the very slick but satisfying *Vanquish*, and also the very weird cult-hit *God Hand*. *Resi 4*'s boss battles were epic in parts and we're confident that the experience is going to translate to this new experience. Suda51's games have a reputation for being a bit schizophrenic in parts, so we're intrigued to see how this creative force can be paired with the more sensible approach from his industry peer.

2011 suddenly just got a whole lot more interesting. **Paul Taylor**

They Say

"Players will find themselves surrounded by demons set on destroying their heart and soul. Only the strong will survive"

We Say

Look, ignore the clichés and look at the blokes behind it. These are two guys that have earned masses of respect from gamers all over the world and you can be certain you'll play something weird, scary and very stylish

Verdict

BAD SHAPE

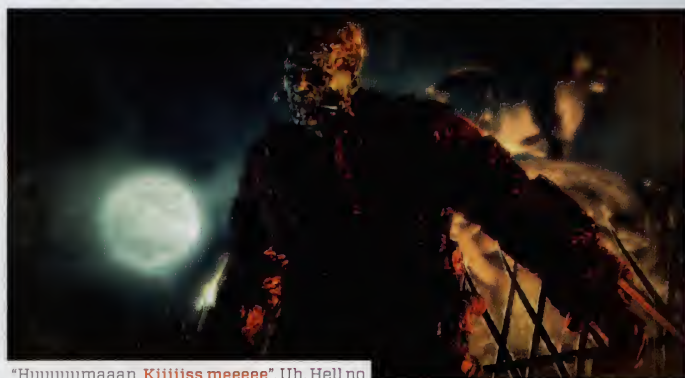
NEEDS WORK

GOT POTENTIAL

LOOKING GOOD

GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING



"Huuuuuuuuuu. Kiitliss meeeeee". Uh, Hell no



Stuck in the middle

It's going to be interesting taking on insurgents and the PLA as both will require very different strategies. A scrap with insurgents typically means extremely close range fights in urban environments, where IEDs and ambushes are the norm. Taking on the Chinese will be much more mid-to-long range engagements where the latest in military tech will be deployed. Could this be our first taste of death from some sort of Chinese variant of the new XM25? And if so, will it be a sweet or sour experience?

Audio cue: a military version of the *Baywatch* theme

Operation Flashpoint: Red River

That's not cordial you're drinking

Ever since trying *Fallout: New Vegas'* brutal extreme mode, we've been gluttons for realism (read: punishment). *Operation Flashpoint: Red River* is set to sate our masochistic desires by not only continuing the series' dedication to the 'one shot, one kill' warfare, but also by giving us an actual real-life country to get killed in this time around.

If you're unfamiliar with Tajikistan, here's a quick tourist's guide. According to *Red River* it's a mountainous country bordered by some of the worst military hot-spots in the world, its primary import is bullets and its chief export is you and your comrades. In body bags. Not the best place to visit, perhaps. But it certainly is a rad country to set a tactical shooter that features four-player online co-op and a narrative designed to immerse players in the reality of war. It's going to be some theatre too; you're a US serviceman beset on both sides by Afghani insurgent forces and China's no-nonsense PLA army. Sounds like the dictionary definition of FUBAR to us.

With no shortage of opposition wanting to pop you, *Red River* will force you to rely much more on teamwork. As mentioned before, you can enlist the help of some buddies via drop-in co-op, or you can also rely on friendly AI that appears to be much improved over the last title. You can issue direct orders to your four-man team via a refined combat wheel and you also have limited fire support options from two other four-man teams. Their official designations are Alpha and Charlie, but we called them 'Team Flesh Sandbag' and 'Bullet Sponge Company', respectively. Truth be told we're fairly impressed with the way the friendly AI would suppress and strategise without needing much input from us. Codemasters is also offering more

customisation options this time around. Each of the four classes (rifleman, grenadier, scout and auto rifleman) come with their own collection of weapons, as well as unlockable equipment and gun attachments for customisable loadouts.

Every soldier has two perks from a large variety of class-specific abilities whenever you spawn, while a separate skill point system allows you to permanently upgrade your soldier's core abilities. The idea here is replayability, as you're encouraged to build up a diverse roster of veteran soldiers that will be suited to different combat scenarios, or to better integrate into your mate's 'über co-op squad'. Thankfully, regardless of whether you're in the campaign or one of the four multiplayer modes, you'll always be grinding away on one persistent XP system.

Interestingly, Codemasters is balancing the super-realism – such as accurate bullet ricochets and wounds that affect your performance – with the sort of HUD upgrades that regularly aid *Call of Duty* folk. These include a fairly helpful last-known-position radar, an improved tactical HUD and several auto-aiming assists. Thankfully, all of these training wheels and strategic spoke-dokeys can be switched off by hardcore veterans looking for a purer experience.

Dragon Rising had potential but was unceremoniously rushed out the door. Codemasters certainly doesn't appear to be making the same mistake here. Along with the AI upgrades and the in-roads being made with verisimilitude and accessibility, it's also giving the visual engine a shot in the arm. Literally in fact; along with destructible environments and ragdoll physics, this game now has limb loss and 'explosive disintegration'. This could be amazing. Sign us up. **Adam Mathew**

They Say

"*Red River* is being built around four player co-op online play, complete with a strong narrative, new enemies and combat scenarios to deliver gameplay that immerses players in the reality of war like never before"

We Say

Realism vs. fun is a difficult balance. Also, you had us at 'explosive disintegration'.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF
SURE-THING

The Pitch

It's modern warfare but without all the Michael Bay wankery

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: TBA 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

PLAYERS: 1-4

Killzone 3

Request: a Space Nazi Zombies mode

"Rico, this is HQ, I'm dating your mum". "You motherfu-". "Precisely"

It's been ages since we gave *Killzone 2* a play, and we'd nearly forgotten what the visual virtuosos at Guerrilla Games were capable of. In two seconds flat *Killzone 3* had us gaping at the screen like stoned goldfish. Part of that awe can be attributed to how sharp the visuals look, but a major slice of our amazement came from how sensual it felt through the controller.

In order to facilitate snappier movement and aiming, *Killzone 3*'s control system has sacrificed some of the 'heft' that was unique to *Killzone 2*. There's still a unique sense of kinetic weight and realism to how the weapons handle, but now it's faster and easier to aim and shoot with your favourite Hig annihilator. If you hated on *Killzone 2* because it felt like a slug simulator, you'll want to reconsider your stance on this series.

Even more so if you own a Move controller. Speedier aiming is definitely a by-product of motion controls and reloading with a flick of your wrist is undeniably cool. We're happy (and surprised) to report that with a bit of practice the processes of turning and navigating a level with Move works remarkably well. We'd say that *Killzone 3* puts the FPS controls in *Time Crisis Razing Storm* to shame – but really, that game put itself to shame.

Our hands-on demo took place in the first half of the game where Sev is trying to regroup with ISA forces. The level itself was simultaneously

one of the most ugly and beautiful environments imaginable: a junkyard on a dusky, windswept Helghan. Supported by a handful of ISA soldiers we soon get reacquainted with the signature (and sublime) first-person cover system and use it to trash an entire legion of Helghast scum.

It's quite refreshing to revisit a shooter that doesn't rely on a difficulty-retarding soft-lock on system. Firing from the hip at a reasonable distance with an LMG isn't as futile a tactic as you might think. Likewise, running in for some up close and personal murderin' is a viable option thanks to the new execution maneuvers. Our personal favourite? Tapping **△** to double-thumb eye-gouge a Helghast trooper to death.

For every firefight that we successfully get through we're greeted with a short cinematic that details the broader scope of the ISA's guerrilla war. Without spoiling too much of what we saw, we can confirm that Rico is still being a contrary, tourettes suffering tool to any authority figure and Sev is still trying to keep him calm. In this case Rico is badgering the overly-cautious Captain Narville and we did notice that the team had a female sniper with them called Jammer. She didn't say too much, but she exuded pure bad-assery.

Our short glimpse at *Killzone 3* culminated in an absolutely titanic boss fight with what can only be described as the Helghast equivalent of a giant, enemy, robotic crab (bristling with rocket launchers). Even at an extreme distance it was almost too big to be contained by our television. Much like this on-screen behemoth, *Killzone 3* is much too big to be ignored by any serious first-person shooter fan. After our brief soiree with it we can't wait to jump into the full game and attack its weakpoint for massive damage. **Adam Mathew**

The Pitch

Helghast killin', splitscreen co-op and sweeter player character movement

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: SHOOTER

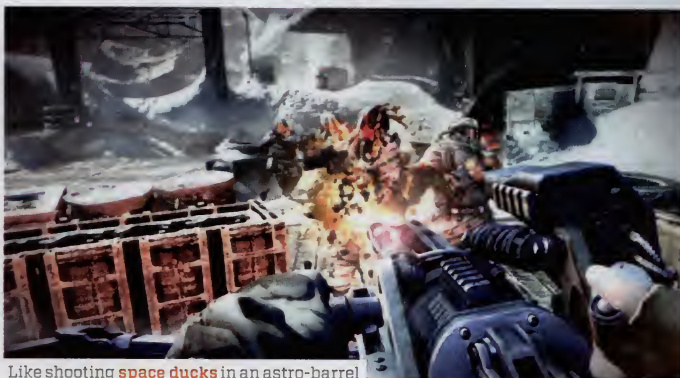
RELEASE: FEBRUARY 2011

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: GUERRILLA

GAMES

PLAYERS: 1-24



Like shooting **space ducks** in an astro-barrel

They Say

"Helghan has devolved into a world of political scheming, rapid infighting, and murder.. With limited supplies and no re-enforcements, the ISA must now fight not to win a war, but to survive a lost one"

We Say

It looks amazing and it handles like a dream. Just tone down Rico (a bit more please) and you're set.

Verdict

BAD SHAPE
NEEDS WORK
GOT POTENTIAL
LOOKING GOOD
GREAT STUFF

SURE-THING

Two heads > One

The rumours you've heard are true – *Killzone 3* features a two-player split-screen co-op mode and it works fantastically. Although he isn't presented in any of the cinematics, Sev is partnered up with Natko during the ISA's desperate fight for survival on Helghan. Our preview code had the screen split setup vertically (with no option to make it horizontal) and aside from a teensy drop in visual fidelity, it looked and worked great.





YOU CALL THIS **ARCHAEOLOGY?**

He's conquered the jungle and survived snow
- but things are just heating up for the PS3's favourite
posterboy in **UNCHARTED 3: DRAKE'S DECEPTION** ▶

Nathan Drake is the man for the job. He's the kind of character most developers *wish* they could create: a likeable rogue, with an authentic and entertaining personality. Microsoft's crew of stoic, square-jawed icons with the charm of a rock and Nintendo's cavalcade of one-dimensional cartoons just cannot compete with the likes of Nathan Drake. Now he's coming back in what's set to be his most excellent adventure yet: *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*. We chat to Justin Richmond, game director at Naughty Dog, about 2011's most-exciting new title.

The critical and commercial success of *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves* wasn't a surprise. The much-anticipated sequel to the impressive series debut, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, arrived to fanfare reserved for only the greatest of games. As it

stands, according to the likes of Metacritic, *Uncharted 2* is currently the second best-reviewed PS3 game available today – second only to *Grand Theft Auto IV*.

Uncharted 2 bagged handfuls of major videogame industry awards and sold over 3.8 million copies worldwide. Even Hollywood came knocking – a feature film from director David O. Russell (*Three Kings*) and produced by former Marvel Studios kingpin Avi Arad – should start shooting this year.

With the series going from strength to strength, *Uncharted 3*, naturally, was a formality – but where does Naughty Dog even start? How do you follow-up a game as thoroughly excellent as *Uncharted 2*?

"Thank you!" begins Justin Richmond, game director on *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* at Naughty Dog. "First and foremost we want to make a game that pushes us as a company in new and interesting directions. Second, we had a huge list of things that we wanted to do in *Uncharted 2* that we were unable to get to, and we started working on all that stuff right after we shipped that game.

"We know we have a lot to live up to, and as such we are putting tremendous pressure on ourselves to make this next game even more memorable."

The first step is obviously finding a place to set this brand-new adventure. Something that's different from what's gone before yet maintains the now-familiar *Uncharted* atmosphere. Naughty Dog has done dense jungle and snow-capped mountains – the desert makes sense.

But it wasn't just picked because it was different;

it was picked because it was difficult. Like JFK, Naughty Dog doesn't choose to do things because they are easy, rather because they are hard.

"Sand is obviously a really tough challenge for game engines," says Richmond. "That's actually one of the reasons we picked it for *Uncharted 3*. As a company we are always looking to push ourselves in all aspects, including design, art and programming. Sand fits the bill for all three very nicely.

"It's always going to be a risk when you attempt to do something new and unknown, but that is also the exciting part of making games. We are all really happy with the way our sand tech is progressing, and I think you'll love the rest of the stuff we have come up with."

We're imagining lots of sandstorms.

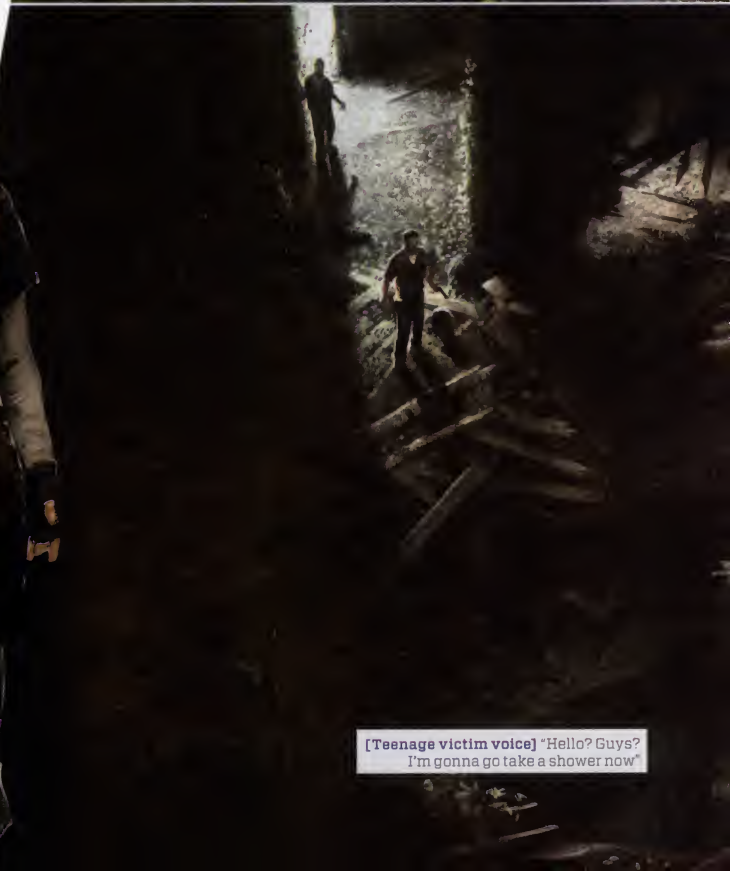
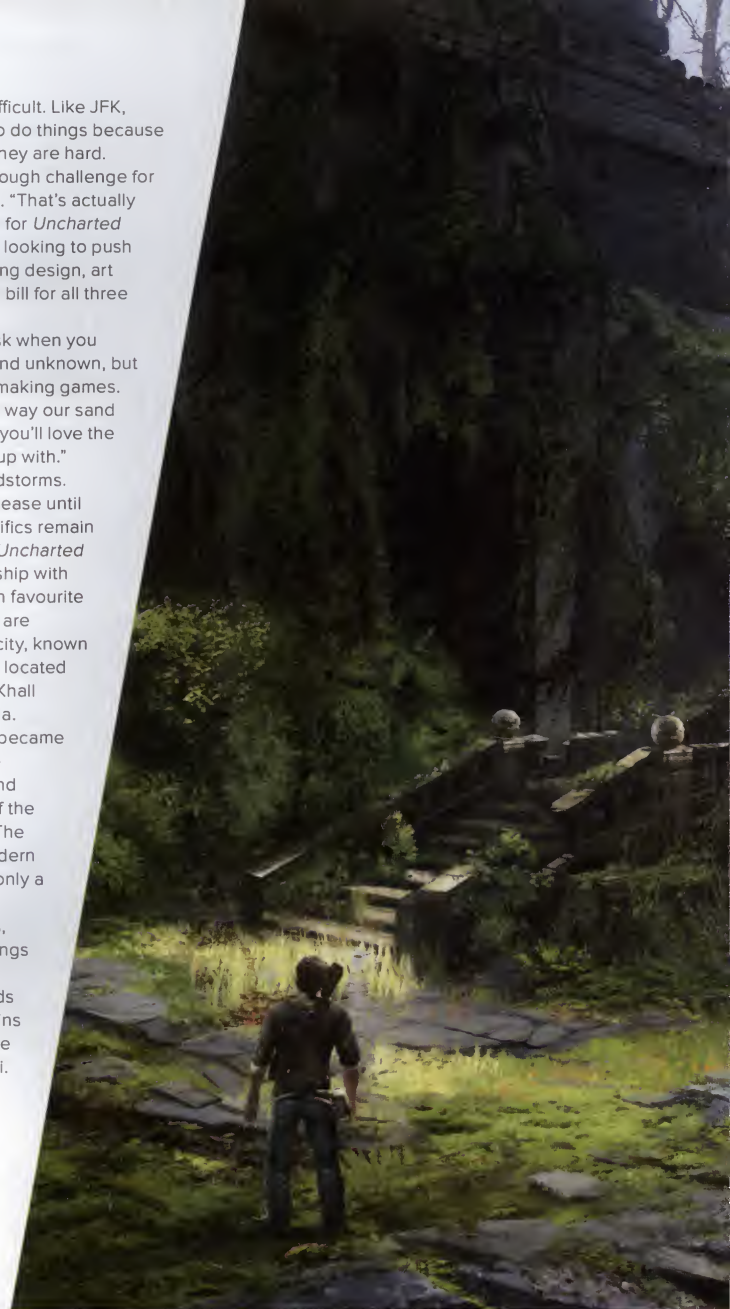
With the game not set to release until November this year, story specifics remain vague. We do know, however, *Uncharted 3* will focus on Drake's relationship with his mentor and father figure, fan favourite Victor "Sully" Sullivan. The pair are searching for a legendary lost city, known as Iram of the Pillars, said to be located somewhere in the vast Rub' al Khali Desert on the Arabian Peninsula.

According to legends Iram became enormously wealthy from trade between the coastal regions and the major population centers of the Arabic peninsula and Europe. The region later became lost to modern history and was thought to be only a figment of mythical tales.

According to Islamic beliefs, King Shaddad defied the warnings of the prophet Hud and his city was smote, driven into the sands never to be seen again. The ruins of the city lie buried somewhere in the sands of the Rub' al-Khali.

The life of T.E. Lawrence – not from his military days as "Lawrence of Arabia," but rather his early years as an archaeologist – has been somewhat of an influence. T. E. Lawrence showed some interest in Iram, dubbing it "The Atlantis of the Sands".

But where else does



[Teenage victim voice] "Hello? Guys? I'm gonna go take a shower now"



IRAM, IRAM SO FAR AWAY

Iram of the Pillars, also called about a billion other things (like Aram, Irum, Irem, Erum, Wabar, Ubar or the City of a Thousand Pillars), is a supposed lost city on the Arabian Peninsula.

In the early 1980s a group of researchers used NASA remote sensing satellites, ground penetrating radar, Landsat program data and images taken from the Space Shuttle Challenger to identify old camel train routes and points where they converged. These roads were used as frankincense trade routes around 2800BC to 1000BC.

One area in the Dhofar province of Oman was identified as a possible location for an outpost of the lost civilisation. A team including adventurer Ranulph Fiennes, archaeologist Juris Zarins, filmmaker Nicholas Clapp, and lawyer George Hedges, scouted the area on several trips, discovering a fort found to have been built on top of a large limestone cavern (which would've made it an important oasis on the trade route to Iram).

Four subsequent excavations were conducted by Zarins tracing the historical presence by the people of 'Ad, the assumed ancestral builders of Iram.

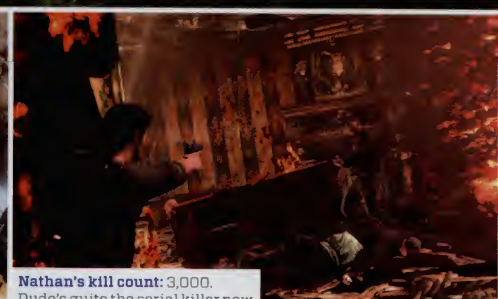
What Drake will find, however, we remain unaware of. Mostly people who want to kill him, probably.



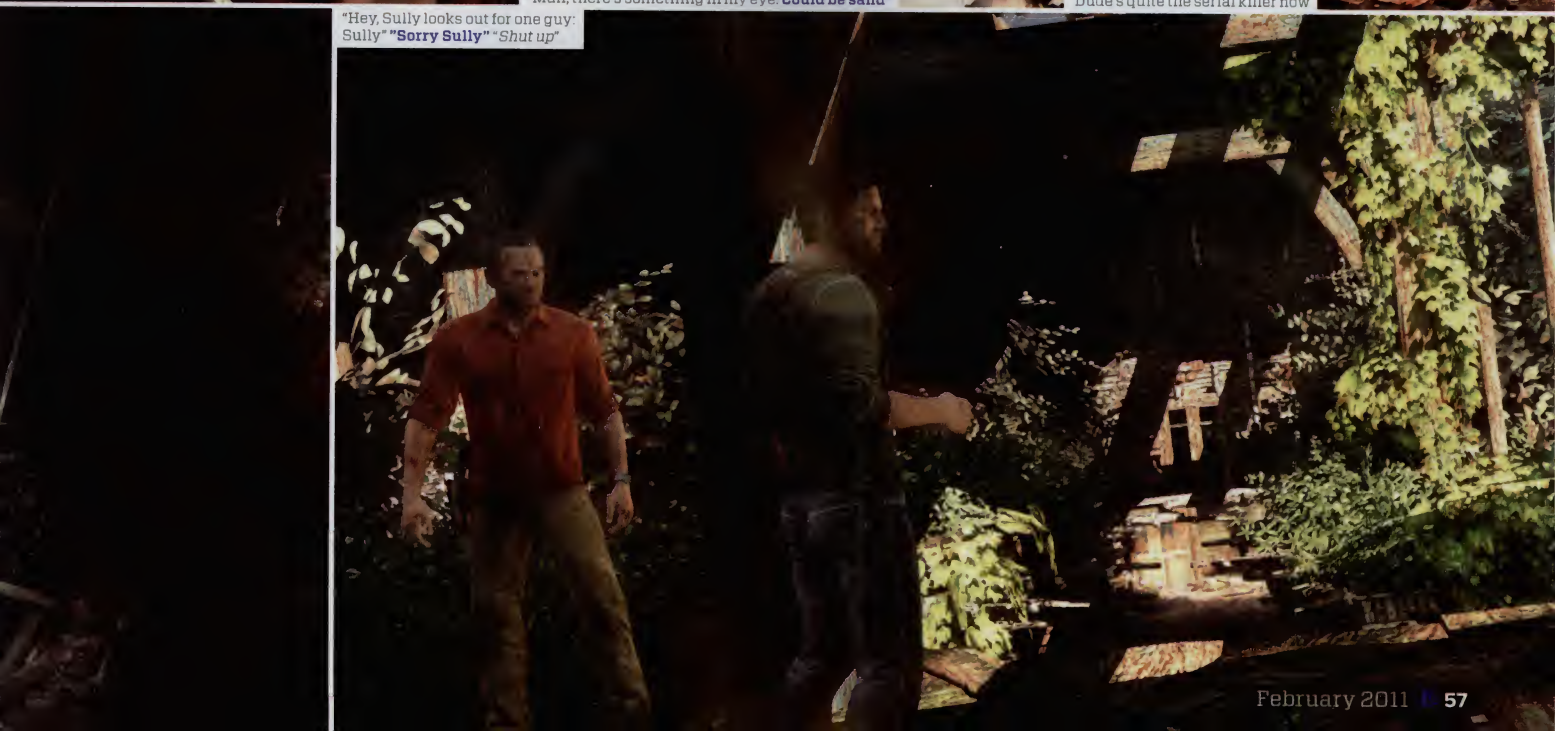
When a problem comes along pistol whip it. It's not too late



"Man, there's something in my eye. Could be sand"



Nathan's kill count: 3,000.
Dude's quite the serial killer now

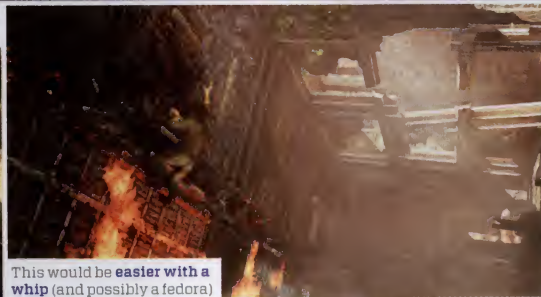


"Hey, Sully looks out for one guy:
Sully" "Sorry Sully" "Shut up"

"We pushed the PS3 pretty hard last game"



The new stare-off minigame in action. Our record's eight hours



This would be easier with a whip (and possibly a fedora)

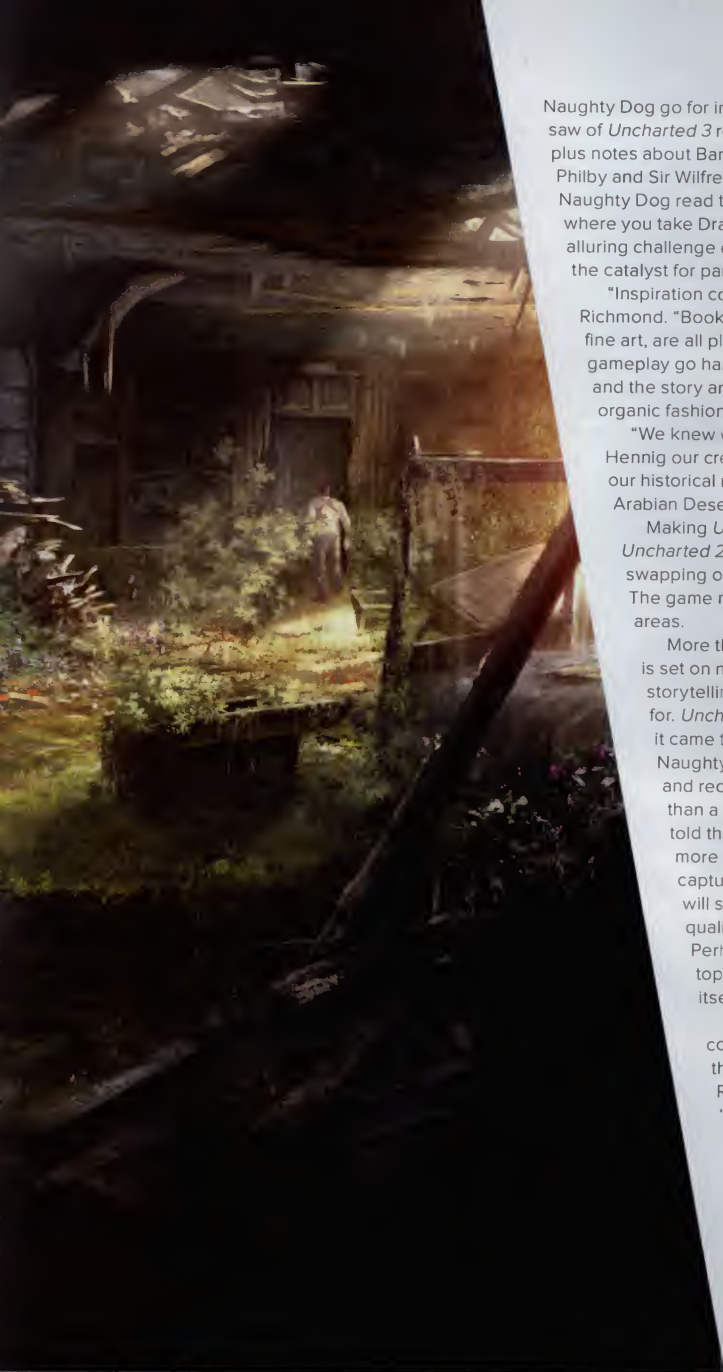
2nd floor: goons, traps and other bad juju. Mind your step



If you can't stand the heat get out of the ancient kitchen



Nolan North returns to the role that made him, well, everyone



Naughty Dog go for inspiration? The first footage we saw of *Uncharted 3* revealed a T.E. Lawrence book, plus notes about Bartram Thomas, Harry St John Philby and Sir Wilfred Thesiger. Does the crew at Naughty Dog read the texts first and decide that's where you take Drake next, or was it just the alluring challenge of creating a sandy environment the catalyst for part three?

"Inspiration comes from everywhere," says Richmond. "Books, legends, movies, comics, fine art, are all places we draw from. Story and gameplay go hand in hand at Naughty Dog, and the story and design arose in a sort of organic fashion."

"We knew we wanted to do sand, and Amy Hennig our creative director came up with our historical mystery revolving around the Arabian Desert."

Making *Uncharted 3* as astonishing as *Uncharted 2* can't simply be achieved by swapping out the backgrounds, however. The game must also innovate in other areas.

More than ever before, Naughty Dog is set on nailing the character-driven storytelling the series is renowned for. *Uncharted 2* was no slouch when it came to production values (and Naughty Dog already approach casting and recording more like a film studio than a games studio) but we've been told that *Uncharted 3* will make even more expansive use of motion-capture filmmaking techniques that will serve to further enhance the quality of character performances. Perhaps *L.A. Noire* won't have the top rung of the animation ladder to itself for too long.

Naughty Dog is also concentrating on improving the climbing and combat. References have been made to "backwards climbing" and we know that Drake now able to take on multiple opponents at the same time. Contextual melee attacks and new stealth options have also been mentioned.

How about the multiplayer? Naughty Dog co-president Evan Wells stressed in an interview

with Entertainment Weekly late last year that significant resources are directed towards expanding *Uncharted's* online multiplayer and co-op capabilities.

"We want to take on the big boys of the multiplayer genre," Wells told EW. "It has become something here at Naughty Dog that will become an important part to all our games."

We presume these big boys are the likes of the *Call of Duty* series, games that live on long after release thanks to incredibly robust multiplayer. Sadly there's not too much Richmond can reveal this far out.

"Unfortunately, I can't reveal anything about the multiplayer aspects of the game yet," he says. "Believe me when I say that it is bigger and better in every way from what we did in *Uncharted 2*. In the coming months you will hear all about what we are going. I am excited to talk about multiplayer, it's just not quite time yet."

Naughty Dog has been exclusively developing for the PS3 for a number of years now. How much more have they squeezed out of the PS3 since *Uncharted 2*? Is there anything left to discover or is it now about optimisation? We just don't see the PS3 being replaced in the next few years, and that's a long time for a console.

"We pushed the PS3 pretty hard last game, and will continue to do so with this one as well," says Richmond. "We have fantastic programmers who have found all kinds of cool ways to optimise the engine since *Uncharted 2* shipped. This game we can get even more stuff on the screen while maintaining both frame rate and the cinematic feel of the game. I think people will be blown away with what we are doing with *Uncharted 3*, and the programmers who found us those optimisations are a huge part of that."


Uncharted has always had a supernatural twist in the middle of the game. Can Richmond give us a hint about who (or what) Drake's going to meet next?

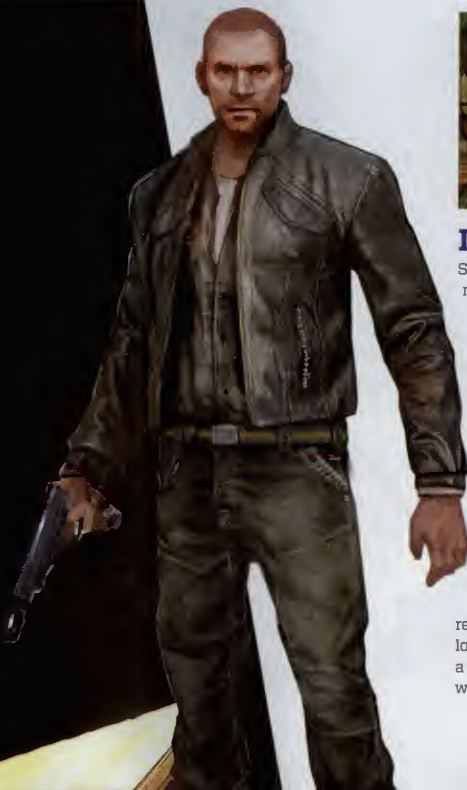
"This time, Drake is going up against the occult treachery of a shadowy clandestine organisation and its ruthless leader," says Richmond. "Suffice to say that Nate will be pushed to his limits, both mentally and physically by the end of the game. Other than that I can't give any spoilers away, sorry!"

With the third game in the works, a movie in the pipe and the first Nathan Drake novel, *Uncharted: The Fourth Labyrinth*, set to land later this year, 2011 marks the beginning of Naughty Dog's push to make *Uncharted* a true transmedia entertainment brand.

We can't really see it failing.

But how about an Elena spin-off? We're slightly in love with her.

Richmond smiles: "I'll pitch it to the rest of the Dogs." 



DON'T CALL HIM JUNIOR

So the story focuses on Drake's relationship with his mentor and father figure Sully. Sounds great; it makes us think of *Indiana Jones* and *The Last Crusade* - old treasure hunter, young treasure hunter. Also the greatest movie ever made. Discuss.

"It is flattering to be compared to Indiana Jones, thank you," says Richmond. "And obviously *The Last Crusade* is awesome - although I like *Raiders* more personally."

"We have a different feel with *Uncharted 3* than what they did in *The Last Crusade*. Drake and Sully are more on the far side of the law than Dr. Jones - could you imagine Drake as a college professor? They can get away with more in terms of their behavior."

"*Uncharted* is a character driven series, and everything we do boils down to making sure the relationships come across in the game. We heard the fans loud and clear in the cries for more Sully. You'll get to see a deeper side of Sully and Drake's relationship, and fans will get a kick out of where we are going to take them."





The God of War meets the Brethren of Gore in the biggest fighting crossover of the decade. It's going to get messy

Given enough time you'll find that a series turns from being a franchise and into a celebrated slice of history. *Mortal Kombat*, the 2D fighter that caused controversy worldwide with its extreme and graphic violence back in the early '90s, actually turned out to be more than a tabloid headline and became a decent fighter, rivalling *Street Fighter* for some serious arguments in the playground.

God of War, with its handful of titles across the PS2, PS3 and PSP, has consistently hit

development benchmarks while giving us a series of must-play action games. This series is as critical to – and as much a part of – PlayStation as *LittleBigPlanet*, *Gran Turismo* and *Ratchet & Clank*. Plus, it stars one of the angriest, most bad-arse warriors ever created.

And now the two are crossing over. Kratos will be a playable character in the next *Mortal Kombat*, exclusive to PlayStation 3 (of course). Whilst it wasn't inevitable that the two were going to meet it did have a lot to do with the

passion of *Mortal Kombat*'s co-creator, Ed Boon.

"Many of us on the *Mortal Kombat* team have been fans of *God of War* since the first game came out," said Boon. "We really admire that the game is violent, bold and unapologetic about what it is. Additionally the game has great graphics, an awesome story and one of the best hero/villains in any video game."

Kratos isn't (well, wasn't) your typical hero when the first *God of War* title came out in 2005 on PS2. He had a purpose – but he was an



Ermac attack: would you like fries with that?

angry, violent man. You wouldn't buy him a beer in the pub, though you still had sympathy for this anti-hero. As a leading character he's no Solid Snake, or some other soldier on a mission. He's led by fury. It's hard to say you like him but then there's a reason why those games kept selling, and why he's made the crossover to plenty of other games too (see 'Rules of Kratos'). If you couldn't identify with a trait the main character had then why would you bother? The idea for Kratos slotting into the brawler came up from a series of development discussions both Sony and NetherRealm had.

"We were talking with Sony about the type of unique content we could offer on the PS3," says Boon. "One of the options was the support of stereoscopic 3D and the other was unique characters. Once that idea came up, I think everyone was thinking the same thing – Kratos

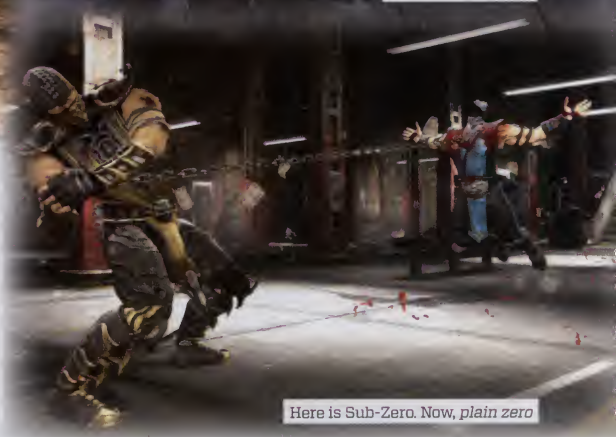
– and everyone loved it. He is the perfect fit."

A fighting game's probably the best place for Kratos because, well, that's what he's great at. He's been in *Soulcalibur: Broken Destiny* on PSP, and while he was an excellent addition to their roster he was missing, well, the buckets of red stuff that you'd expect to come gushing out of his blades. As well as following the Rules of Kratos set out by Santa Monica Studios, what do you have to do to make Kratos feel authentic in *Mortal Kombat*?

"Honestly, not that much," admits Boon. "We had some minor tweaking to do with some of the assets in order get the Kratos model and key animations into the game, but there wasn't much outside of that. The look of *God of War* is very complimentary to the look we are going for in *Mortal Kombat* and we don't think we could find a better match if we wanted to."



You don't know Jax



Here is Sub-Zero. Now, plain zero

"A fighting game's probably the best place for Kratos"

THE RULES OF KRATOS

Early last year Sony Santa Monica's Jonathan Hawkins and Bruno Velazquez, fresh from the then-recently-wrapped *God of War III*, explained the interesting Rules of Kratos to us. The studio decided to apply a strict set of rules to Kratos, long before he became a PlayStation icon, in order to give him a firm identity that they could maintain throughout the franchise. These rules, self-imposed by the studio, were put in place to ensure that Kratos' barbaric nature and bloodthirsty attitude were never compromised.

The Rules of Kratos are simple. One: he's always grim and angry. "We never see him smile or joke," says Velazquez. It's true too. Think about it. You've never seen Kratos grin or laugh. Not a smirk. Not a snigger. Two: Kratos never falls on his back

until he dies. If he's knocked down, he'll fall on his stomach and recover – not his back. Falling on your back is weaksauce, and weaksauce is the sauce of the weak.

Three: Kratos must always have forward movement. This applies mostly to his attacks, but Kratos will never retreat or back away for any reason. Kratos has no reverse gear. In fact, Kratos only has two speeds: forwards, and kill.

Most interestingly, Sony Santa Monica insists that these important rules apply to any and every appearance of Kratos, inside the *God of War* universe and outside of it. These strict guidelines apply equally for commercials and cameo appearances, even ones as lighthearted as his role in *Hot Shots Golf* and his Sackboy

character in *LittleBigPlanet*.

"Yes, there are rules and guidelines that were supplied to us regarding Kratos," says Boon. "At the same time, the guys at Sony's Santa Monica studio know that this is a fighting game, and with it certain allowances are necessary to maintain the integrity of the game. We've been working quite closely with them for everything from the look to the fighting style and move sets for Kratos."

"Falling on your back is weaksauce, and weaksauce is the sauce of the weak"



LittleBigPlanet: Spartan Sackboy



Soulcalibur: Broken Destiny: Swords > sandals



Hot Shots Golf: Red jacket, green jacket



The man himself cracks a smile



Not even the penitent man will pass this God's wrath



And this is why lit Sambuca is a stupid, stupid drink

It's refreshing to hear. When we visited NetherRealm's studios in Chicago late last year they told us they were really looking forward to getting back to making a truly mature title. Its last *Mortal Kombat* game, *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe*, stumbled when it came to the fatalities. DC characters didn't actually cause a fatal finishing move, but were called 'Heroic Brutalities'. They were subject to the normal *Mortal Kombat* fatalities, however.


This time, the game's into full-gore mode. Every fight is painfully barbaric and intentionally over the top as strips of flesh fall off the fighters. Once your special meter's full – filled by landing hits and special attacks – you can perform an X-ray move that shows the bone-crunching fury of your blows.

"The main difference between this last game and this one is our return to a mature presentation and *God of War* is also aimed at the same audience," continues Boon. "Because of that, we can offer more detail when it comes to damage and fatalities which we couldn't offer in the last game which was 'T' rated [close to the Australian equivalent of an 'M']."

"With that being said, the guys over at

Sony's Santa Monica studio totally understand what *Mortal Kombat* is and what it all entails. We do want to be respectful to their brand though and in the end, Kratos will play very much like all the *Mortal Kombat* characters, but with a unique feel that is truly Kratos."

We haven't heard anything about the types of attacks our Ghost of Sparta will have, or what happens when he's defeated at the end of a match – we can't imagine that there'll be a radical shift away from the new *MK* action. Kratos won't be part of the main story mode, but will be playable in all other modes. We say this with utmost respect but if you're playing *Mortal Kombat* for the canon then you're playing for the wrong reasons. It's just going to be flat out fun to tear up the screen using Kratos and you can't deny the energy this bladed maniac has.

Plus, he has his own stage as well for players to create their own mega grudge matches. Says Boon, "to keep true as possible to the *God of War* universe, the stage we have was not only based on levels from *God of War*, it was created using some of Sony's actual in-game assets. We're pretty excited about how well it all turned out." 

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU

Two more characters have been revealed: Sindel and Ermac, each respectively plucked from *Mortal Kombat 3* and *Ultimate MK3*. Sindel's like Bayonetta's crude cousin, using her hair in match to destroy her opponents.

Ermac's a telekinetic warrior who uses his psychic skills to throw enemies and lob bolts of energy at them, whilst defying our pissy physics and teleporting around the stage fists out.

They're a surprise announcement: we're not sure just how classic they are, but we doubt they're included at the expense of other more recognisable fighters.





Words: Paul Taylor

The SCIENCE *of* HATE

Universal truths and absolute statements have caused wars. But there's one truth we can agree on: people love to argue

It's clear to us you're a discerning kind of person, purely because you're reading this magazine. We'd like to think that you trust our reviews and opinions, and ultimately a review in *OPS* is our educated opinion. We've played a tonne of games, we've done our research, discussed our verdict with other people in our team and want to steer you in the right direction when you go to hand over your hard earned cash.

We know *Uncharted 2*, *Red Dead Redemption* and *LittleBigPlanet* aren't perfect but they are excellent games, and most of our peers agree. However, sometimes people reckon we have it wrong – not just *OPS*, but every critic who exists. Utterly and completely wrong. But, why do 'ordinary gamers' have such different opinions? Why don't the doubters see any merit in a title that has earned praise from the world's press? And why do some people go out of their way to make caustic comments about games that everyone else likes?

This is a study into the science of hate.

A difference of opinion

We don't think for a second that you should have the exact same opinion as us. But we do like it when people express their opinions in some sort of logical and reasonable way. However, the chances of that happening seem to be slim, especially on the Internet, and when you compare the view of an 'ordinary person' against people whose job it is to review games and movies, the voice of the people can be pretty extreme.

Even before it launched in 2001, aggregate review site Metacritic has collated review scores and quotes not only from videogame critics such as ourselves, but for movies, CDs and TV shows since 1999. Its aim according to co-founder Marc Doyle was to use critics to inform a buyer's purchasing decisions. There is a spot on the site that allows for its users (anyone can sign up) to leave their ▶

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

METAScore: 96 (UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM, BASED ON 105 CRITICS)
USER SCORE: 8.9 (INCLUDES 191 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

This game is very overrated, obv not a 0 but sure as hell nothing higher than an 8, I gave it a 0 mainly as a response to all the unnecessary 10's, I bet most of the people who gave it that haven't even played it, stupid fanboys. **DanielJ.**

8

This game deserves a 9, but there are issues. The camera sensitivity is really slow, with no way of adjustments. That can be a real pain in multiplayer, and is bad in the single and coop mode too. The cover system is also not perfect... If it was not for this issues, I would rate this game 8, but its not playable before noughtydog fix this things. **olet**

1

Is it really a 1 no but I had to give it this to counter all the unnecessary 10's its getting from fanboys yes graphically excellent but thats were it stops the gameplay is broken drake constantly rolls when you want him to go into cover causing him to be killed numerous times the enemy ai is beyond retarded... **paulg**

1

Every Aspect of Uncharted 2 that has been implemented as a new addition to Uncharted 1 sucks. This game is completely lifeless and full of bugs! Stay with Uncharted (one!) if you like adventure games on PS3!! **Liferuler**

8

own reviews of games and to rate them on a scale of zero to 10. The user reviews and critic reviews are kept entirely separate – the critic reviews are the crux of the site.

"People have really focussed on [the user's aggregate score], as they're just as interested in the user experience as what the critics thought," says Doyle. "From a founder's perspective I favour the critic's stuff compared to the user stuff because it's the critics that have played a lot of games, they have history, they can put things in context, and it's their scoring integrity."

"So when you're a user you can say 'oh I loved it! 10!' or 'I hated it! Zero!' – it's very simple – whereas a professional has to put it in context. There's more precision and more of an informed approach to it. The other founders and I believe that a critic's review has more merit to it as something that has value, as opposed to polling a 1000 people [and generating a score that way]."

"The average consumer is not really obliged to follow [a review] criteria, or any consistent criteria," says Dr. Daniel King, a research associate at the University of Adelaide's School of Psychology, "and is not even obliged to finish playing the video game before passing judgement! For that reason alone, I think you'll get a lot more variation in opinion from the general public... Many people may 'write off' a game simply because it's a genre that they don't have any interest in."

X-Factor

It's not just that people disagree with opinion, they want to sabotage the scores too, whether it's out of spite, laziness or because of sheer biology.

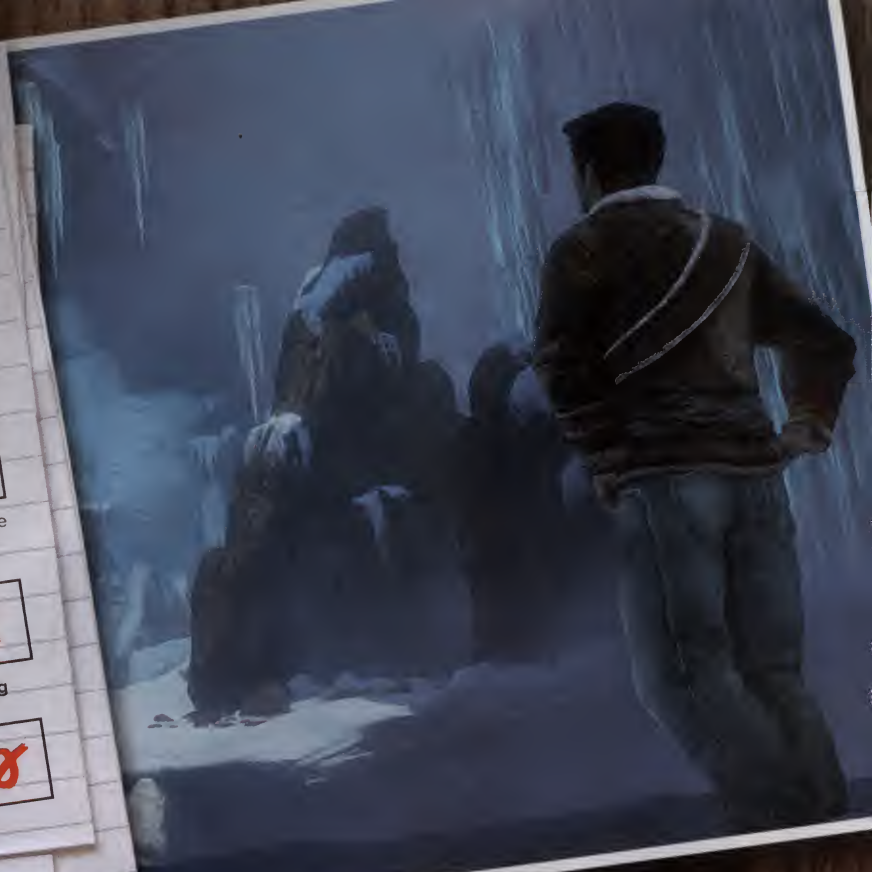
"Children and adolescents may not yet have fully developed the cognitive capacity to reason in a balanced way," continues King. "They can easily become fixated on one unimportant detail of the game and then that one detail shapes their entire view of the game. This is particularly likely to occur if their first experience with the game is negative."

"Another group of people who may give out extreme criticism [are] impulsive people [who] are very quick to draw conclusions based on limited information and are subsequently immune to conflicting information – they stubbornly hold on to their first impressions. This sort of behaviour is very similar to the way problem gamblers maintain that they are winning, despite the fact they have been losing steadily for quite some time."

So, there's a biological reason why people are quick to react. We've seen examples where other gamers have totally written something off as being awful or a 'fail' based on one aspect of a game, and will constantly spout that view until we can get away from them.

"Under our old system which was replaced in August 2010 you used to be able to leave a review as long as you left a unique email address," explains Doyle. "One person could leave multiple reviews of the same game with different addresses. Now though you have to have an account, so it's a little bit harder to 'stuff the ballot box' now, and we thought that would encourage more responsibility, but people are still abusing it. Unless you're paid or assigned to review something and give a thoughtful score you just see 'seat of your pants' scores from users. A lot don't do that."

As for sabotage, "maybe it's the human nature thing of wanting to sway the overall average," proposes Doyle. "So if you think 'hey I like this game, it's solid, but I want to affect



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

METAScore: 98 (UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM, BASED ON 64 CRITICS)
USER SCORE: 7.5 (INCLUDES 195 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

Don't count my vote. It was there to minimize the 10s. Anyway my real score for this game is 7. The graphics are good, the music is medium quality but the problem is the gameplay. The missions are the same thing over and over... The critics where either bribed or where to exhilarated by the new minigames **NickH.**



the MOST OVERHYPED OBJECT EVER ON THE FACE OF THIS PLANET. I cant believe all the reviews, im starting to think rockstar paid off every critic. My fave game of all time is gta vice followed by san andreas so you can only imagine my dissapointment after playing this pece of shit. Way too realistic which ruins the all the fun **johnbarros**



It's a joke that people have rated this when it only came out yesterday. Unless you've completed the game u really don't have any place to rate it. **JamesM.**



it's a shame this is getting such good reviews. it's gta3 with very slightly better graphics... rockstar simply gave the people what they wanted and it worked. **MatthewB.**



[CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS]
 CAN EASILY BECOME FIXATED
on one unimportant detail



NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT

METAScore: 89 (GENERALLY FAVOURABLE REVIEWS, BASED ON 50 CRITICS)
USER SCORE: 6.5 (INCLUDES 20 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

Gameplay: 4/5 Very fun and reminiscent of NFS: Hot Pursuit on the PS2... Graphics: 5/5... Sound: 4/5... Other: -13/5 If you were hoping to play with a racing wheel setup on PS3 then you're screwed... Conclusion: 0/10 **onlylunch2**



Allow me to explain my score of 0; I purchased this game and was very excited to play. Pop it in get my racing chair rig setup, but no response?? Is my G27 broken?! Nope....attention everyone: Companies are making driving/racing games in 2010 that do not support steering wheels... Now, I have no idea whether this game is good or not, but this is for everyone that has a wheel that is thinking of getting this game. **ERRORMACRO**



Negative negative, negative. Simply because the creators did not take the time to add support for ffb steering wheels... **SpydrSS**



MODERN WARFARE 2

METAScore: 94 (UNIVERSAL ACCLAIM, BASED ON 67 CRITICS)
USER SCORE: 5.7 (INCLUDES 467 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

You can obviously tell Activision and Infinity Ward paid for the reviews there getting. This is no where near a solid game as they all claim. This wasn't a game release, they was just a money release, and they probably got alot of peoples \$.... **SteveJ**

So, I went ahead and bought it. I played it for about 2 hours (as to give it a fair review). Now totally regret the purchase. I haven't played the single player but the multilayer is totally hosed. **DavidD**

The first modern warfare was a terrible game but this disgusting how can game this bad game gets rave reviews it's a joke. Honestly killzone 2 a very good game yet it's underrated and overlooked by many who buy into the hype of this CRAP!!! **louisd**

This game will make you want to pull the hair out of your head, frustrating for the PS3 to collect enough trophies to be even close to collecting the platinum, horrible online. **CarlG**

8

2

8

8

AS WE ALL KNOW, THE USE OF 'REASON' IS NOT A PREREQUISITE *for posting something on the Internet*

that overall score so I'm going to give it 10 to bump [the average] up a little bit. And if I really didn't like it, and the critics gave a game three or four, I might drop that right down by giving it zero just to really have an effect on it.' So some people know that if they give it an extreme score they're going to move the needle more dramatically than if they gave it an honest score."

Welcome to the Internet

These 'seat of your pants' or impulsive scores only appear en mass on the Internet. It's pretty damn easy to rattle off a load of knee-jerk reactive dribble in a fit of undignified fury on a platform where immediacy leads to great power but also a thousand voices yelling at the same time.

"We are bombarded by opinions that before the time of the Internet would probably not have found a medium or an audience," says King. "No matter where you are you are going to encounter some extreme views from less than one per cent of the population. As we all know, the use of 'reason' is not a prerequisite for posting something on the Internet."

King explains that the Internet has created something called the Online Disinhibition Effect (ODE), which partly explains why people let loose online without forethought. The ODE says that people lose their inhibition when they're anonymous, and assuming a fake identity lets them ignore social norms and acceptable behaviour.

"So, being anonymous online makes people feel like they have taken on a new identity," continues King. "This makes it easier to reduce a sense of personal accountability. Basically, they think 'I am not myself online, so I can't be held accountable for what I say or do.'"

Doyle agrees. As a self-confessed movie buff he rates movies on the site under his real name. "When people look at my reviews I know that if I'm not careful then I'm going to get ridiculed. Most

people don't use their real name, they're anonymous so they have free reign to do whatever they want. We're all for privacy; people shouldn't have to put their real name up there, but when you allow for that anonymity there's no responsibility."

Pack mentality

Even if you have an excellent game, there are factors outside of the software that bring up bile in people's fingers. While it affects the PC crowd more than PlayStation owners, Digital Rights Management fries people's nerves. "If people just hate one feature, they get on a message board and say 'hey let's get on to Amazon and Metacritic and vote this sucker down,'" says Doyle. "There is possibility of manipulation in the reader reviews section."

He's not wrong. The PS3 version of *Modern Warfare 2* was slammed by user reviews partly because the PC version – which had naught to do with the console release – didn't have dedicated servers.

Plus, there's the fanboys who in their single-minded state just love to either dismiss anything that's not on their console, or hate the fact that the owner of Another Console can play a multiplatform title. Dr. King explains it.

"There's a concept in social psychology called 'Ingroup Bias,'" he says. "This refers to the preferential treatment that people give to those who they perceive as belonging to their own group or follow their way of thinking. Ingroup bias is very common among hardcore gamers, and it usually occurs along lines of what console one owns and plays, or what genres of games one prefers or plays regularly. Ingroup bias would suggest that a person who owns Console X would be less nice toward

someone who does not own it, or who owns a different console.

"Some people become very attached to certain video games, especially if they have invested a great deal of time in that game like 40-50 hours, and so they come to perceive that game as a defining feature of a group to which they belong. Berating someone's favourite game if it differs from your own view is about asserting perceived ingroup dominance, and ensuring that an opposing view does not threaten one's interests as a member of an opposing group."

Doyle's seen firsthand what the fanboys can do to excellent titles.

"We [as Metacritic] went through that big time with *LittleBigPlanet* and all the Xbox 360 owners went in and rated it super low," says Doyle. "But [I think because] a console's expensive if you can only own one it turns into this 'us versus them' thing which is kinda nationalistic. People want to validate their purchasing decision by bashing something they can't have... I [also] think that people might just not be very good at a game, and therefore they're going to vent on a site like ours."

Disagreeing just to disagree

Then there's some people that just want to argue with professionals. "They might fit the clinical criteria for anti-social personality disorder," says King. "Anti-social people are more prone to getting into arguments, they have lower empathy and have difficulty seeing the world from other people's point of view, and they have tendency to violate boundaries or 'push buttons.'"

"We did a lot of focus testing," says Doyle. "People off the street have these strange notions of



GRAN TURISMO 5

METAScore: 84 (GENERALLY FAVOURABLE REVIEWS, BASED ON 53 CRITICS)

USER SCORE: 7.4 (INCLUDES 89 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

This game is really crap. The positive reviews here are only from PS3 fanboy people and they want to fool you into buying this piece of crap. My real rating is 1, but I give a 0 because of those deranged and worthless PS3 people giving wrong reviews with false acclaim. PS3roxxlol

Sure it's a detailed and compelling racing simulator, but it's hard to not feel disappointed after the time it took to make, especially since Forza 3 stole the spotlight. austinbond

6 years of development for nothing. It is sad how people call this game realistic when it's clearly not. It is not even fun. GT5 excels only at failing. tyty

So bland it's unbelievable. After 5 years of waiting we get this? Stick with the newer franchises. I doubt there will be a Grand Turismo 6. Shoki

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

METAScore: 89 (GENERALLY FAVOURABLE REVIEWS, BASED ON 53 CRITICS)

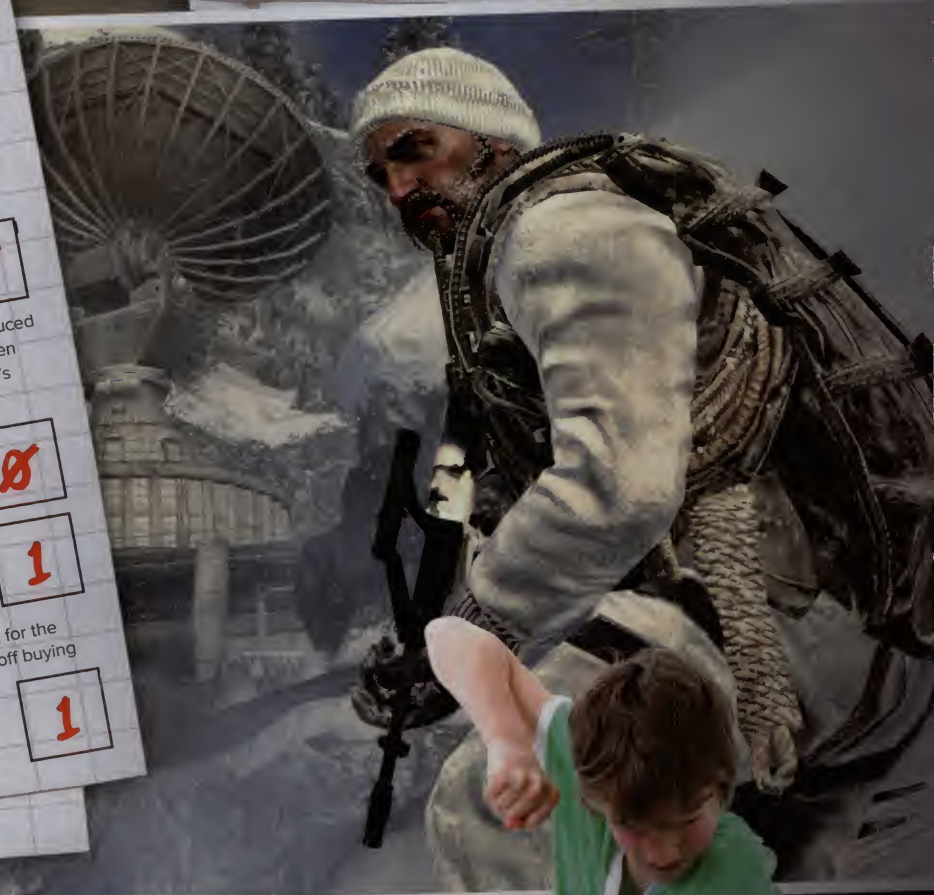
USER SCORE: 5.8 (INCLUDES 97 NEGATIVE REVIEWS)

I don't understand all you people giving this game a 10. I love MW2 and the Call of Duty series but please Black Ops is garbage. I mean the campaign is fine but the online multiplayer is horrible. 1. Graphics seem like PS2. 2. Sound FX are awful. 3. The game engine Treyarch uses sucks. 4. It's produced by Treyarch. 5. Gameplay seems speed up 1x and is clunky. 6. When you melee someone the knife doesn't have the same effect like it's going into the guy as in MW2. bnekic

Black Ops is an insult to FPS gamers. My rating of 0 is based only on the MP as that is the only reason I buy COD. malohurst

Activision must slob a good knob to get such good critical reviews. Critics are raving about this game wherever you turn, but the real story is that the game is quite lacking and hopefully it's garbage enough that Activision has finally slaughtered the golden goose they've been milking for the past 3 years... Let me just say that you're probably better off buying Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011. thegreatjh

Way over rated people. Who is giving these 10's, 15 year olds?! Shadowphreak



"Oh I'm not going to trust critics, they're biased or corrupt!"

"Anti-social people also have difficulty in regulating their emotions," continues King. "They may be more prone to experiencing angry outbursts or violent swings, which creates strained or abusive relationships with most people they know. They're not really interested in proving a point, they just want to cause chaos and grief."

It turns into a petty and mean power struggle, but really, it's foolish to take too much

stock in what the unaccountable, impulsive, sabotaging, anonymous fanboys say about your favourite games. We've played the games, we've spoken to the developers and are very confident that our opinion is going to help you enjoy your time with your PS3.

It's never going to end, of course, and that's a sad thing. Games lose at the end of the day, so we just suggest you keep on playing what you like. "You can't put as much merit on the reader reviews [on Metacritic]," says Doyle. "You'll never be able to." 🐼

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MUSIC AND VIDEO GAMES ON PS3



PS3™
PlayStation 3

The game is just the start...



SONY
make.believe

in review



► **GAME OF THE MONTH**

Gran Turismo 5

Driving and striving and hugging the turns

Review ratings

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be *perfect*. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an incredible fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible kudos.

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few too many minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the best in its genre, a 9 comes with very high praise.

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a handful of mild to moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but with the quality games we do have, there's no need to drop real money on a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Nothing good here, and definitely not worth removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality. If a 10 is better than virtually every game available, a 1 is worse than virtually every game available. OPS has handed out this score only once.

This Month

72 Gran Turismo 5

78 NBA Jam

78 The Sly Collection

80 Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

80 Sonic 4: Episode 1

81 Blacklight: Tango Down

81 Crazy Taxi



▲ We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Sony Bravia for the best picture possible.

Play this
if you like

Gran Turismo 4

Info

FORMAT: PS3

GENRE: RACING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

DEVELOPER: POLYPHONY
DIGITAL

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$119.95

Gran Turismo

Love the beast

The weight of expectation is crushing. *Gran Turismo 5* arrived in our office in a brown, padded envelope. No fanfare. No fuss.

That's how almost all of our games arrive, but it was almost anticlimactic. We didn't expect Jesus to hand deliver the disc while Jimi Hendrix played the 'Top Gun Anthem' in the background, but the fact that we were about to play the most-anticipated PS3 game in the console's lifespan just refused to sink in.

Surprisingly, *GT5* is a standoffish sow to begin with. It makes little effort to communicate much of the vast depth it boasts to players; rather it hides away most of its cars and key tracks to be revealed later. *GT5*, in this regard, is a bit of a relic – a time capsule from an era where, if you wanted something, you had to unlock it.

A few hours in, however, and the six years between *GT4* and *GT5* vanish. We're back in old territory, juggling the costs of weight reduction against a supercharger and gobbling up race circuits in a never-ending quest to get in front and stay in front. We're collecting cars like a child in the Hot Wheels aisle. We're back in the groove.

More than anything, *GT5* feels familiar. The menus, while clogged, still shine to the strains of cheesy elevator synth. Head into GT Mode and you'll find the same game we all played over a decade ago, but re-imagined and expanded.

GT5 is still an RPG masquerading as a racing game. You need to choose your tools wisely

and focus on improving the ones that marry best with your driving style. A broad approach with many cars isn't as efficient as a narrow attack with a few key favourites you've tuned to perfection and know inside-out. *GT5* even has a levelling system, blurring the lines between RPG and racing game even more. The levelling system controls your progression through the game's events and dictates what sort of cars you're able to buy. The latter is a bit frustrating, if understandable for balancing purposes.

It looks as good as it ought to look, too. Polyphony Digital has always ensured that the *GT* series is at the tip of the visual spear and *GT5* is no different. Sure, the shadows are blocky, very noticeable in cabin view and during replays, and the higher resolution this generation has made it more difficult to disguise the trickery that goes into building distant background objects.

And yet it'd be undeservingly harsh to describe *GT5*'s graphics as any less than amazing. Much has been said of the gulf between *GT5*'s standard car models (the ones that have been ported from *GT4* and given a HD nip and tuck) and its premium car models (the ones that have been hand-built from scratch, down to the last bolt). Browsing through them in their respective menu screens the differences between the two are like night and day. On the track, however, it's a different story. *GT5* mixes premium models and standard models with each

other on track all the time and, while racing, the generational gap is far less evident. In motion it's astonishingly lifelike, even when pushing 16 cars around the track at once. Real-time reflections abound and sparks fly.

The weather effects, while limited to just a handful of tracks, are equally magical. Rooster tails erupt from the rear of cars as they scorch across the rain-soaked asphalt. Wipers work overtime clearing away the sliding drops from your windscreen.

“Polyphony Digital has always ensured that the *GT* series is **at the tip of the visual spear** and *GT5* is no different”

smo 5



Getting Started in GT5

- Think of *GT5* like an RPG. Like an RPG, specialisation seems to win out over diversity. You should probably focus on gearing up a handful of very different cars rather than trying to manage a massive garage of cars in various tuning stages. This should give you enough depth to compete in most races.
- You get a permanent maximum horsepower boost on a freshly purchased car if you change the oil before driving it the first time, new or used.
- Focus on cheap add-ons to give you car the edge at first, then move onto the more expensive kit.
- Want to stick the road? Get racing tyres as soon as you can.
- Turn the assists off. Traction control saps power, retards acceleration and creates killer understeer.
- Complete the Special Events - you'll score plenty of handy cash.
- You'll get gifted cars for completing all gold in most events. Focus on only going for gold cups from the beginning.


Roads: **where you're going** you'll still need them


It's the Pits

The fully animated pit stops are one of the game's highlights.



Choose your **tyres** and **fuel load** before you arrive



Your pit crew **go to work**



Tyres come off, **fuel goes in**



Tank is full, **just the tyres to fit**



"Go, go, go!"


Our mighty Bluebird in **full flight**. Glorious.

"Buy a decent force feedback wheel and you'll never look back. Seriously"

The lighting is nothing short of incredible. Marvel as gratuitous fireworks illuminate the Tokyo sky as you speed beneath them. Gape at the way the meticulously-modelled tail lights not only glow just right, but illuminate trailing dust with a soft red hue. Watch as streetlight and sunlight alike bathes your dashboard, sliding back and forth across it so realistically you simply stop noticing it. Check out the way the sun reflects off the slick rubber of fresh skid marks. It's a stunning, stunning spectacle.

The handling, while not unlike the brilliant handling of GT4 in many ways, is more nuanced than ever. Cars feel more attached to the road and the sense of weight is tremendously translated. Turn off the driving aids and leave them off – they ruin the experience. Tame you car as it squirms under heavy braking. Control your throttle and steering inputs as you manhandle your car through corners. The somewhat clinical in-car view doesn't quite capture the violence of racing a car at speed but the physics are near flawless. Buy a decent force feedback wheel and you'll never look back. Seriously. Spring for a G27.

Audio improvements are marked. GT's engine notes have never been this ferocious and the constant tyre squealing has been addressed.

It's a truly impressive game.

There is absolutely no doubt that Polyphony

Digital has worked hard on GT5. We visited the studio in 2009. *They sleep under their desks.* We're not questioning effort and we're not saying Polyphony could've worked *harder*. We are, however, saying it could've worked *smarter*.

For instance, dedicating valuable development time to building premium versions of not one but two WWII era German military vehicles was pure folly. Yes, kooky cars absolutely have their place in the GT series and we do love experimenting with oddball vehicles. Still, GT5's premium models took so long to build it was only possible to make 200 of them in *five* years. With that in mind novelty cars like these should've been struck from the list immediately.

The *Top Gear* tie-in doesn't feel like something that's been gestating for three or so years now. It's stunningly underused. Polyphony presumably spent months of time and resources impeccably recreating the popular track exactly as it's seen on the tele, but then went and ruined it by covering it with witches hats. And what's with the bizarrely placed replay camera angles that don't match the ones seen in the actual programme? It doesn't really *feel* like *Top Gear* at all.

Worse still, all that work on this much-touted *Top Gear* component has resulted in a measly three events – and only one of them features an *actual sports car*.

That's right. The mishandling of the *Top Gear* Test Track becomes painfully and embarrassingly obvious from the get-go. Not only has the game eschewed the time-trial format the track is famous



Keep your hand on the wheel and **your focus on the Focus.**

for in favour of bog standard one-make races against a large field of opponents, Polyphony has ensured your first experience of the track, (famous for putting dazzling supercars through their paces) is an astonishingly frustrating VW SambaBus race. Frustrating because the VW van is barely capable of hitting 80 kilometres per hour and because, while you'll be disqualified for deviating mere inches from the racing line, your CPU opponents are free to knock over more cones than a Byron Bay brickie on a rainy day.

Things improve slightly for the second event when you're handed the keys to a 2004 Lotus Elise but immediately plummet into stupidity again for the final event: a Volkswagen Kübelwagen race. That nobody at Polyphony thought perhaps battles against the clock (featuring the kinds of supercars featured on *every episode* of the TV show) would've been a better idea than a race featuring a Nazi troop carrier is baffling.

After snaring a Gold Trophy in the first event you do open the track up for general use, but how was something as fundamentally crucial as a standing start option for time trials missed for this circuit? It's even more confusing.

The used car lot is a bust. We understand how it works, but all it succeeds in doing is marginalizing four-fifths of the cars in the game. You can search for premium cars via make in a dedicated menu. Four out of five cars in *GT5*, however, don't get a showroom. It just means that, without cross-checking a spreadsheet of cars available in the game on the web, players can never really be sure if a car they're after is

actually in the game or not. *GT4*'s menu screen, where all the game's manufacturers and cars were viewable from one hub, was far superior.

We've received some correspondence over the past month from readers furious they can't find the Holden or Ford showroom, despite the fact Kazunori Yamauchi confirmed to us Australian cars would feature. Holden *does* feature; only it's the same two models that appeared in *GT4*. There isn't a showroom, though. You have to wait until they cycle into the used car lot. FPV is absent, but that's not our only problem with the car list on offer.

It may seem overly malicious to criticise the vehicle selection. There are, of course, over 1000 cars on offer. It's a staggering amount, dwarfing any racing game ever made. It's just that it seems like a victory from quantity over quality. *GT5*'s amazingly large roster features over 20 different MX-5s but it lacks many of the world's most interesting new cars from the past two or three years (see 'Flop Gear'). In fact, counting each 2010 NASCAR car as one model, *GT5* only features 14 2010 models. That is a *hypnotically small amount* of new cars for a game that came out in December. Worse still, there are only 20 2009 models.

There's a real discord between the game's cutting-edge look and feel and the game's content. *GT5* may represent the pinnacle of contemporary racing sims technically but the rapidly aging car list makes it feel instantly dated.

Why is the latest Aston Martin a 2006 DB9? It's not an isolated question. So many of the



We put some destruction up in yo' grille

A RUF Bargain

So why can't the most world's most prestigious driving game arrange to get a single Porsche in it? Well, you might be surprised to know that it's not exactly up to Porsche. For over 10 years now EA and Porsche have had an exclusive arrangement, since the Porsche-only *Need for Speed: Porsche Unleashed*. There are a few sublicenses granted by EA to other publishers, hence why Porsche has appeared in Microsoft's *Forza* series, but Porsche allows EA to shop these around as it sees fit. Despite the fact Kazunori Yamauchi has placed Porsche at the top of the list of his most-wanted makes and Porsche conceding it ought to be involved in *GT* it would appear an arrangement between EA and Sony could not be met. Still, it's the only reason anybody on Earth knows what a RUF is.

Wow, a Holden with a **Holden badge on it**



And another! Take that **you Chevrolet posers**



A rare shot of the Veyron **without its hyper-drive engaged**



Flop Gear

Yes, we're addicted to hooning around the *Top Gear* Test Track. Still, we can't help but feel disappointed that the affiliation with the world's most-pirated TV show is undercooked. Covering the track with cones destroys the overall aesthetic and the invisible walls found just metres beyond the edge of the tarmac mean you can never have a big lose and spear off into the grass. Also, the lack of a standing start option is unforgivable.

Worse still, out of the top 10 fastest cars around the track in reality only ONE appears in the game. Bizarrely, world-beating supercars like the Bugatti Veyron Super Sport, Gumpert Apollo, Ascari A10, Koenigsegg CCX, Noble M600, Pagani Zonda Roadster F, Caterham Seven R500, Pagani Zonda F and Maserati MC12 are absent from what otherwise the largest gaming garage ever put together. The solitary top 10 car that made the cut? The regular Bugatti Veyron – and it's not even one of the game's premium models.

Power Lap

One lap of the *Top Gear* Test Track in the Pagani Zonda R. It doesn't feature a standing start option so you need to creep up to the line and do it yourself.



We're off, with hideous amounts of wheelspin



Keeping it tight out of Chicago



Hard under brakes into the Hammerhead



Did we lift for the Follow-through? Yes



Screaming out of Bentley



Cutting it fine on the second-to-last corner



And across the line!



We can race this track blind. Thanks, Prologue

games models tap out at around the 2004-2006 mark, or with concepts that have been superseded by actual production models. We get 2006 Focus ST but not the recent RS. We get the VY Commodore but no VE. We get a random old 2004 Land Rover Range Rover Sport Concept (from GT4) but no Range Rover Sport. It goes on. All this recycling ruins GT5's new car smell.

We can go on. The roof cam view for standard cars is thoroughly pointless; why Polyphony continues to use it over a normal bonnet cam is beyond us. Arcade Mode should make more of the game's cars available instead of simply a few dozen – what's the point of 1000 cars if they'll never all be driven? The AI has improved but it's still not exactly organic. We watched the same kart go wide and hit the grass during one of the karting special events over at least a dozen restarts. Collecting paint colours as one-use items is a boneheaded idea. The damage system is hugely underwhelming. Visual damage is passable (if light) and there's no mechanical damage. At the time of this review a patch has been issued to make mechanical damage an option for online racing, but for the main game itself there's nothing. You can still use cars ahead

to pinball your way through corners if you wish. B-Spec is a peculiarly niche way to pad out 50 per cent of the game – few gamers will have the patience to command AI drivers through an extensive career mode in real-time.

The list of faults we've found during our time with GT5 is surprisingly long.

And yet, we just keep playing it, and playing it. For all its foibles the profoundly realistic handling keeps drawing us back. The desire to tune up competitive cars from old pusbuckets keeps us fiddling with air filters and extractors. We'll criticise the final product, but that doesn't stop us drooling over the supersexier premium car models, lavished with the kind of detail that we just did not anticipate seeing this generation.

GT5 is like two games in one: an update of GT4 that should've been released three years ago, merged with a cutting-edge racing game featuring car models and lighting effects the likes of which the PlayStation world has never seen. Call it what you will. A flawed masterpiece, maybe. An uncut diamond even.

GT5 falls further short of perfection than we might have guessed, but it's still the big wheel down at the cracker factory. **Luke Reilly**



We're only last because we were frigging around taking screenshots



Fast-tyre cam for the win

Final Say

PRESENTATION Some track elements and standard cars don't stand up to close scrutiny but on the track, at speed, this game is smooth and sexy – like molten butter sliding down a kimono. The interface confounds however.

SOUND Tyre squeal and engine notes have improved. Collision noises and menu music have not.

CONTROLS The best simulation-level handling we've ever experienced.

REPLAY VALUE There's just so much content; you'll never get behind the wheel of every car. The online functionality disappoints though.

Verdict

We remain surprised that we can fault GT5 after so many years gestation, but it's still a deep and feature-packed racing game unlike any other.

9

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NBA Jam

The best two-on-two you can have fully clothed



There's a game on American TV called **Slamball...**

Play this if you like

Waiting since 1993 for a good *NBA Jam* game

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: SPORTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PLAYERS: 1-4
RRP: \$79.95

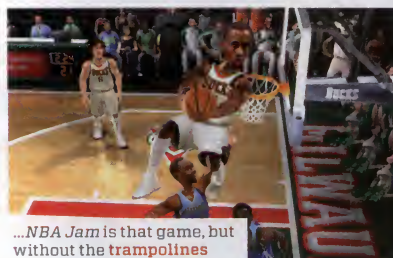
Saying *NBA Jam* is too exaggerated is like saying a lemon is too sour, or that Tequila makes you vomit too much. That's just what it does.

The two-on-two basketball game has a history to live up to, since it gained a cult following in the mid '90s from its time at the arcades and on the Mega Drive and SNES home consoles. This modern update really captures the essence of what made the series great, and the extravagant announcer Tim Kitzrow returns with snappy one-liners and catchphrases. It just wouldn't be *Jam* without him.

On the surface *Jam* is classic arcade fare. Pick a team and two players from a selection

of five or so, get on the court and start a flamboyant show of wild dunks and hold-your-breath three pointers. It's instantly accessible but that's not to say it's shallow either. Pick below the surface and there are tactics that can be employed to sway a match, and you'll need to be creative and quick to sink three buckets in a row to make your B-ball go 'on fire'. Get into this state and he'll be able to land outrageous dunks and sink three-pointers with relative ease.

NBA Jam always succeeded by being better with friends, and that hasn't changed. There's an updated remix mode with a few new modes that are more gimmick and curious distractions than serious contenders for your time. You'll get the most amount of playtime out of the standard mode, especially when you're really dominating a game against your mates. **Paul Taylor**



...*NBA Jam* is that game, but without the trampolines



Final Say

PRESENTATION

Competent animation mixed with intentionally silly facial characteristics. Bright, colourful, like *Jam* should be.

SOUND 'Boomshakala!' returns. Everything else feels just as bombastic.

CONTROLS Forget using the right stick for shots and focus on buttons instead.

REPLAY VALUE With the right friends you've found something to play between games. Solo's cool but limited.

Verdict

Perfect for fans who will soak up the nostalgia and revamped gameplay. Newcomers should find fun here too.

8

The Sly Collection

The newest addition to Ocean's Fourteen

Play this if you like

inFamous

Info

FORMAT: PS3
GENRE: PLATFORMER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SUCKER PUNCH
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$59.95

How are your rose tinted glasses? They've been getting a fair workout lately with a bunch of classic games re-released, and this is a trilogy that probably didn't get a mass audience the first time around.

The *Sly Raccoon* games have elements of platforming, stealth and action bundled up by cel-shaded graphics. The first was more a simple platformer, very linear but it was market fresh at the time. The best part of a decade later and it's definitely the weakest of the bunch, but invest yourself and you'll appreciate its sequels even more.

The second, *Band of Thieves*, adapted Sly's playgrounds into a cluster of open environments with more emphasis on teamwork. Instead of just controlling the good thief his two buddies

were made more integral to the game. You'll be surprised that the game feels so alive and innovative.

By the time you hit the final part in the trilogy you'll be in love, and see the genesis from Sly to Sucker Punch's current next-gen action platformer *inFamous*. We often say games have charm and it's easy to be gushing about older games. This collection doesn't get a free pass; it's just a bunch of really fun games.

It helps that the graphics have been revamped, and they bloom into widescreen HD. It's a given that they look better than the PS2 originals, but even more importantly they don't betray your memory of how good they looked.

Included on the disc is a bunch of Move minigames and stereoscopic 3D support. The mini games will briefly entertain you before you forget about them and go back to the main fare. This is a pleasant surprise. **Paul Taylor**



"George Clooney can kiss my furry ass"



Final Say

PRESENTATION Lovingly updated. Fresh eyes may not appreciate it as much.

SOUND Cheeky strings and sound effects complement the on-screen antics.

CONTROLS This is the catalyst for *inFamous*' Cole. Therefore, spot on.

REPLAY VALUE If you ripped through these on the PS2 you'll get about 30 hours max out of everything on here.

Verdict

A trio of under-loved games waiting to be adored.

9

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12



ON SALE NOW!

Pac-Man Championship Edition DX

May contain lots and lots of neon



Play this if you like

Pac-Man, Katamari Damacy

Info

FORMAT: PSN

GENRE: ACTION

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

DEVELOPER: NAMCO

BANDAI PARTNERS

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$15.95

Go on, roll your eyes, sigh for a bit and wonder just how Namco can possibly re-package *Pac-Man*. Done? You should know early on that we only have reasons why you should buy this game, as the 20-year-old gaming icon returns in one of the most addictive and compulsory arcade games of the decade.

The basic premise remains. Pac-Man zooms around a maze, eating dots and power pellets, whilst simultaneously avoiding fatal ghosts before turning on them in a pellet-fuelled frenzy.

Now, though, the maze layout changes every time you pick up a piece of fruit or end of section treasure. Dots don't litter every single corridor like old *Pac-Man* titles; instead they're laid out to coax you through an optimal path, and static, sleeping ghosts are placed on intersections. Pass by them and they'll wake up and start to mimic your movements. The kick is that by eating a power pellet you turn on this ghost train (seriously, that's what it's called) and crank up the points multiplier.

More points means the game speeds up,



You see dead people? **No doubt, you just ate random floor pills**

and up, and up. You can shake the ghosts off temporarily with a bomb, and while it saves lives it punishes you in the very important combo stakes. Plus, there's now a 'bullet-time' moment when you're about to collide with a ghost in its regular form, giving you chance to escape.

Championship Edition DX is superbly balanced. It rewards skilled players with a great challenge and extremely frantic gameplay, while those that initially struggle won't feel unfairly punished when the game speed knocks itself down every time Pac-Man dies. You will crave to beat your highscore on the litany of tables, and every time you complete a round something new opens up.

This is both modern and classic gaming, and excellent value for the asking price. A sound purchase. **Paul Taylor**

Final Say

PRESENTATION

Impeccable. Bright, colourful and with a good variety of skins and sprites.

SOUND Usual techno fare, but it fits in with the insane hi-speed action.

CONTROLS When Pac-Man hits top speed things become very frantic

REPLAY VALUE

Near infinite with online leaderboards.

Verdict

Very hypnotic and damned addictive. Your PS3 has never seen *Pac-Man* like this before. You'll love it.

9

Sonic 4: Episode 1

One blue blur that's worth his fur



If you liked it then you shoulda put a ring on it

Play this if you like

Sonic Rivals

Info

FORMAT: PSN

GENRE: PLATFORMER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$19.95

The blue dude with the 'tude has been spiralling out of control since his halcyon days in the early '90s. During his 16-bit inception Sonic's future burned so bright he was causing light-induced seizures amongst his fans. Nowadays he is a cautionary tale, a mere shadow of his former self (though, to be fair, he isn't as bad as Shadow the Hedgehog). All that has changed with *Sonic 4*.

This is a back-to-basics 2.5D side-scroller that ditches the new-age gimmickry and bears remarkable resemblance to *Sonic 1* and *2*. In fact, all of the four main zones – Splash Hill, Casino Street, Lost Labyrinth, and Mad Gear – feel like old haunts re-jigged. Similarly, the original special stage mini-game returns, but this time around you're the one controlling the maze tilt in.

Other gameplay improvements include the ability to homing attack straight onto enemies or the various Acme springs that litter Sonic's reality. This skill goes a long way to solving a lot of the platforming issues we originally had with Sonic – for while he could generate more speed than Pablo Escobar's backyard shed, Sonic was never what we'd call sure-footed when it came to jumping. Unfortunately, there are still maddening sections where the hedgehog's lazy walk acceleration and unreliable somersault can get you repeatedly killed. Also, the level designers love to accelerate you to ludicrous speed only to yank the world out from underneath Sonic without much warning.

But for every archaic design choice that's needlessly re-trodden for the sake of sticking to 'the blueprint', *Sonic 4* introduces other new features that help to replace the nostalgia with a bit more substance. Just the simple ability to quick-jump to any zone, act or special stage in any order (and to compete with your mates scores and times) makes this instantly better than its predecessors. Long-suffering Sonic fans rejoice; the magic is back. **Adam Mathew**



Let's all play *Super Hoggy Ball*



Final Say

PRESENTATION A very sharp visual overhaul filled with glorious HD fan service.

SOUND Contemporised bit tunes that will pluck at your heart strings.

CONTROLS When he's doing a zillion k's Sonic rocks. His vertical game still sucks.

REPLAY VALUE It's a bit thin for the price, but it's okay for a score war.

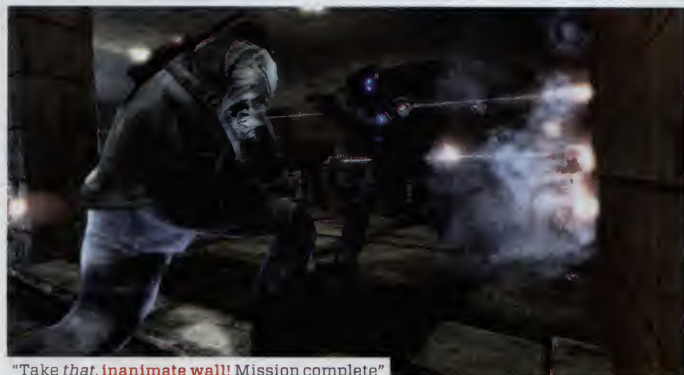
Verdict

Bears all the radness and minor faults of the best Sonic games. A bit short though.

8

Blacklight: Tango Down

It takes 16 to tango



"Take that, inanimate wall! Mission complete!"

Play this if you like

Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Info

FORMAT: PSN

GENRE: SHOOTER

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: IGNITION

ENTERTAINMENT

DEVELOPER: ZOMBIE

STUDIOS

PLAYERS: 1-16

RRP: \$19.95

As part of the covert Black Ops unit, Blacklight, your mission is to locate a missing Colonel captured by a resistance group known as The Order, as you wage war on the digital battlefield with digitized slants on conventional weaponry. You can hone your skills against AI bots (just like *BFBC2* Onslaught) in Black Ops mode, but go it alone at your peril as you respawn back at the start with every single death. And you will die, soldier.

Since the title is devoid of a single-player campaign, online play is slightly frustrating as you adjust to the weapons and tactics. Coupled with the fact that this was released in the US over a month ago, you immediately begin with your back up against the wall against higher ranked players. Still, those that persevere will

enjoy a remarkably different type of gameplay and a unique arsenal.

You come equipped with a Hyper Reality Visor (HRV), which shows all enemy and friendly positions, plus health (as it doesn't regenerate) and weapon pick-ups at the loss of offence. You can't use it and run and gun, so there is a tactical element involved. You also have special grenades that pixelate the blast zone on impact and hide you from sight. Very, very cool.

Each kill has enemies de-rezzing in a shower of pixels as you work through the various modes. Retrieval works like CTF and Domination much like King of the Hill, and there's Deathmatch and Last Man Standing where each player gets a single life. Detonate is the most interesting with a collectable bomb set in the map's centre and each team is tasked with infiltrating the enemy's base, delivering the package and blowing them to kingdom come. **Dave Kozicki**



Final Say

PRESENTATION The graphics are tight, though enemies do have a tendency to disappear into the background.

SOUND Great backing score and electro-styled explosions and beats.

CONTROLS Straight from the default FPS handbook, literally pick up and play.

REPLAY VALUE Heavy, and if you get bored going head-to-head, you can grab a couple of mates and hit some Black Ops missions.

Verdict

While the learning curve is a little steep, the combat and weaponry has an extremely different feel and is well worth a look for the bargain price of 20 bucks.

7

Crazy Taxi

The sum of all fares



Taxi bowling looks like fun but split happens

Play this if you like

Crazy Taxi: Fare Wars

Info

FORMAT: PSN

GENRE: DRIVING

RELEASE: NOW

DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

DEVELOPER: HITMAKER

PLAYERS: 1

RRP: \$19.95

In *Crazy Taxi* you're a cabbie who speaks perfect English, has a genuine desire to get customers to destinations quickly and loves nothing more than getting shrapnel pelted at the back of his head when he's driving well. Not a simulator then.

A better description for this time capsule from the Dreamcast would be: *GTA* cab missions meet *Burnout* meet methamphetamines.

Long-term fans may very well bail on this ride when they hop in and discover the original soundtrack has been ditched (along with Pizza Hut and KFC endorsements). Honestly, the replacement songs are acceptable (and a hell of a lot more varied than the originals whopping two tracks). But for the first few



No Pizza Hut or KFC destinations? Boo-urns

hours it feels wrong having no Bad Religion or The Offspring blaring. Our subconscious even triggered a few ghostly "ya ya, ya yas" a couple of times. Single tears may have rolled.

Obviously, after eleven years the visuals haven't fared so well either. Back in the pre-GTA days Sega's take on San Fran was drool-worthy. Nowadays it's like driving through a bad cubist nightmare. Newer gamers who go in expecting some of the modern creature comforts – like traffic AI, lip synching or a physics system that makes a lick of sense – will be slapped in the face with a culture shock. Anyone who doesn't want their objective arrow to act like a broken ouija board won't like this game much either.

Looking beyond its archaic nature there is still some short-term fun hiding beneath *Crazy Taxi's* hood. Taking the time to relearn the advanced techniques (such as crazy starts/stops, crazy throughs and crazy drifts) can make whizzing about blocky San Fran an intermittently sublime experience. That said, you'll need a buddy to score war with, because when it comes to fun, the meter doesn't run very long.

Only the most dedicated Dreamcasters will enjoy this hasty port. Newcomers ought to invest their 'crazy money' someplace else.

Adam Mathew

Final Say

PRESENTATION Dingo ugly. The widescreen support is appreciated though.

SOUND Good. Rad once you cure the lack of Offspring with a custom soundtrack

CONTROLS Twitchy handling and full of physics bugbears. Just like we remember it.

REPLAY VALUE Crazy Box mini-games are taxing, but getting 'S class' ranks are a breeze

Verdict

An extremely half-arsed port of a pretty rusty classic.

6

▶ WHAT'S NEW

PSN

DEVELOPMENTS

What you can expect to see and play on the PSN

Ubisoft has just announced two new packs for the multiplayer component of *Assassin's Creed Brotherhood*, and both of them are reasonably priced. In fact, they're free.

The Animus Project Update 1.0 is available right now and includes a brand-new game mode and map. Advanced Alliance is a tougher version of the original Alliance mode as target identification and engagement have been tweaked to add more of a challenge. Three teams of two players are going to have to work just that little bit harder to score kills.

Your new map is called Mont Saint-Michel, and is set on an island near Normandy in France. Expect narrow streets, bell-towers and multi-layered buildings that are ripe for diving into, out of and off from.

Landing some time in January is the Animus Project Update 2.0, with another brand-new game mode and map. Chest Capture takes two teams of three players to defend or capture chests – we're imaging a capture the flag scenario. The new map is called Pienza, and details are a bit skinny at this stage except to say it promises a "free-running playground where predators and targets can blend and disappear".

Fans of *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit* can now get a pack of 13 new race and pursuit events, as well as three hot supercars that can be used as a racer and cop.

The Super Sports pack costs \$15.95. For your money you can thrash the Porsche 911 GT2 RS, Gumpert Apollo S and Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Super Sport, and we bet they're going to be spread across the top



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood: now known as AssCreedBro. Funny

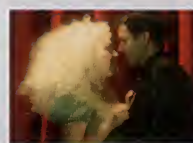
three tiers of available motors. At time of going to print we haven't seen any of tracks or cars but will have a full verdict in our next issue.

Finally, PSN Plus Subscribers can expect this motherload of offers during January. It's not the final list, so check the PS Store for more.

- PSN: *Astro Tripper*
- minis: *Pipe Madness*, *Kahoots*
- PSOne Classic: *Colony Wars*
- Exclusive discounts: PlayTV Live Chat 25% – valid until 6th July 2011
- *Stardrone* (PS3) – 20% off – Day 1 discount
- *Breath of Fire* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Dark Stalkers' Chronicles* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Megaman Maveric Hunter* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite* (PSP) – 20% off
- *Fate Unlimited Codes* (PSP) – 60% off
- *PowerStone Collection* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Capcom Classics Reloaded* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Capcom Classics Remixed* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Capcom Puzzle World* (PSP) – 40% off
- *Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max* (PSP) – 40% off
- MAG DLC Bundle – 50% off
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- Exclusive 'Fire' and 'Year of the Rabbit' Theme
- Premium avatars: *Eat Them* premium avatars x5

vidzone CHANNEL SPOTLIGHT

THIS MONTH: Coldplay & Friends TV



THE KILLERS - MR. BRIGHTSIDE

One of the most toe-tapping tracks ever crafted. It's a damned good song to dance to as well, so turn it up loud.



COLDPLAY - CLOCKS

The clip's standard fare, but the track is undeniably catchy. Try and hunt down the Röyksopp remix online, too. It's great.



SNOW PATROL - OPEN YOUR EYES

We're not massive fans of the track, but this video of a car barreling through Parisian streets is gripping.

VidZone is the largest online music video VOD service in the world, and it's available **free** on PS3. Download the vidzone application and you'll have access to over 13,000 music videos at the push of a button!



PlayStation®Network

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

DEAD NATION



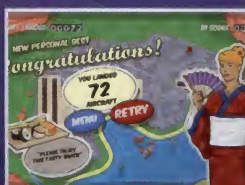
Yep, it's another top-down twin-stick shooter, but it's surprisingly tactical. Also features online and offline co-op, so grab a mate.

DJ HERO 2 HARD EDGE MIX PACK



Though the *DJ Hero* downloads are a bit pricier than other music titles, this one's a standout with the Pixies vs the Prodigy.

FLIGHT CONTROL



We raved about this a couple of issues ago, and it still represents excellent value for Move owners. An absolute steal for less than \$9.

QUEEN ROCK BAND 3 ENHANCED PACK



One of two Queen packs out, this represents the best value, especially for vocalists. 'Under Pressure' is a ripper.

RDR: UNDEAD NIGHTMARE



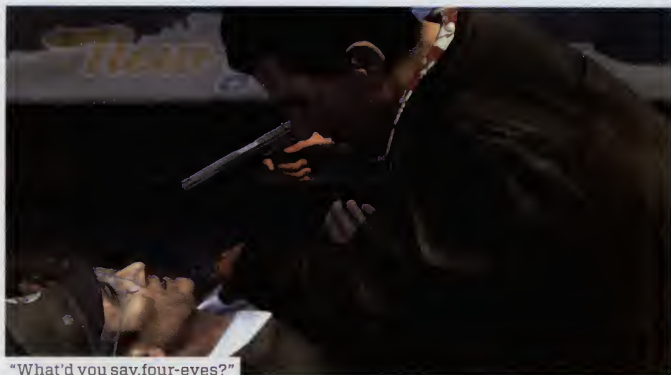
A standalone story that takes the characters of *RDR* and thrusts them into a high-calibre zombie revolution. Absolutely incredible.

WHAT IS PSN?

The PlayStation Network (PSN) is free to join and free to play. No subscription is required to play online. You'll be able to communicate with friends, access the PlayStation Store and download demos, add-ons, trailers, PSN games, PSone classics and blockbuster movies!



PlayStation®Network



"What'd you say, four-eyes?"

GENRE: ACTION **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES **DEVELOPER:** 2K CZECH
PLAYERS: 1 **RRP:** \$15.95

DLC >

Mafia II: Joe's Adventures

Hey Joe!

This third lot of DLC for *Mafia II* is a more traditional expansion, elaborating on storyline of known characters rather than the fun but still anonymous Jimmy.

You take control of Joe Barbaro, Vito Scaletta's partner in crime, which is set in the period Vito goes to jail for flogging ration stamps to petrol stations. He's given 24 missions and a few new areas to explore, and the foul mouthed, heavy-fisted bruiser continues as he did in the main story.

While *Mafia II* was a pretty good action game, we're not sure that you'd bother with *Joe's Adventures* unless you really, really like the game and haven't been absorbed by other, newer, better titles since. While it's fine that the game focuses on Joe we were hoping for more explanation as to why Vito was put away.

The missions are fairly lacklustre too, though there are a few highlights – we really liked a car chase across an icy lake. You'll mostly feel like you're repeating a lot of ground you covered in *Mafia II*.

There's also a bunch of new collectibles and new locations though they don't do enough to make this a compulsory experience.

VERDICT

We reckon you could let this one slide until it's on sale and you're truly scratching for something to do.

GENRE: SHOOTER **RELEASE:** NOW **DISTRIBUTOR:** 2K GAMES **DEVELOPER:** GEARBOX
PLAYERS: 1-4 **RRP:** \$15.95

DLC >

Borderlands: Claptrap's New Robot Revolution

Viva la revolution!

As we've noted in the past, some of *Borderlands*' DLC has been hit and miss. The story-based DLC is generally a lot better than the free-form shooting gallery in *Mad Moxi*'s, and if you're as much of a fan as we are of Gearbox's RPG-cum-shooter you should get this.

The Hyperion Corporation has sent an Interplanetray Ninja Assassin Claptrap to Pandora to hunt you down, but the little robot has gone ballistic after seeing how badly his brethren have been treated. After amassing an army and also augmenting many of Pandora's crazy residents – the ones you haven't murdered – Hyperion have called upon you to punch his circuit boards out.

It's very familiar, packed with humour and the challenging gameplay that the main *Borderlands* campaign offered. There's a bunch of new areas to explore and a decent smattering of treasure chests – all the things that fans want. It's also very rewarding, promoting multiple playthroughs which is sound design since you'll smash through it in less than a day.

This will likely be the last of the DLC; there's a teaser towards the end that hints at *Borderlands 2*.

VERDICT

A must-buy for the series faithful, it ties a solid bow on an overall good set of expansions. Excellent.



Finally, robotic beings rule the world



PlayStation®Network

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

DEVELOPER: TREYARCH
PLAYERS: 1-16

Take *MW2*, and add in some insanely addictive contracts and inventive modes in the multiplayer proper. However, we especially like playing Zombies with a skilled compatriot.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO **PLAYERS:** 1-16

The connection issues that bothered us are well and truly fixed, so there's no excuse not to jump on, form a posse and start hunting for challengers. Much better as a co-op experience.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

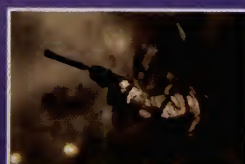
It's like being in the arcades (remember those?) when you had a bunch of lads and lasses hanging around, marvelling at your quarter-circle technique. Champagne gaming.



FIFA 11

DEVELOPER: EA SPORTS
PLAYERS: 1-22

Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is remarkably brilliant with 11 versus 11 matches. It's still as compelling and smooth as last year's effort. Get on it right now.



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

DEVELOPER: DICE
PLAYERS: 1-16

You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics. Team matches have little room for lone wolves.



Cops: they're tops, according to a badge we got at the 1992 Royal Easter Show

GENRE: RACING RELEASE: NOW DISTRIBUTOR: EA DEVELOPER: CRITERION GAMES PLAYERS: 1-8 RRP: \$99.95

Multiplayer > Need For Speed

Hot Pursuit

Short on modes, big on thrills

There's an inverse ratio of fun to modes in *Hot Pursuit*. Keep this in mind if you're yet to play one of the best arcade racers on this generation of consoles, as you'll be a little disappointed that there are only three different events to choose from.

Once you're in, you have a straight up race where it's you in your hot civilian car versus other seven other racers. There's also Hot Pursuit, which is four cops versus four racers, where both sides are equipped with weapons in a race from point A to Point B. Finally, there's Interceptor, a one-on-one cop versus racer with a higher stockpile of weapons, and you're free to use all of Seacrest County in your romp up and down the highways.

And that's it. To say it's underweight is like saying Kate Moss needs a good meal. Sure, it's mimicking the bulk of the events in the career mode – the only mode that isn't represented online is a time-trial – which are a lot of fun, and the XP you gain online goes towards your offline total (the opposite applies as well). But we expected a little bit more.

It's easy to criticise a game for what it isn't – we would like a mode where you have a finite number of minutes to rack up the most amount of bounty points you can, or an increasingly tight point-to-point race across the county where the last man standing wins.

Hot Pursuit's also missing an important country filter, or some type of lobby. Right

now, you can either join a quick game, or host your own public, private or public with friends invited, and it's quick and seamless. We assume there are lots of people playing as we never had to wait long to join a game, or struggle to have someone join ours but you're still flying blind. The netcode's impressive though, keeping things smooth and lag free.

Out of all the modes on offer, Interceptor will probably keep you coming back for more. Races are pretty plain on their own, and in anything less than Supercar class they're a bit lame – rubbing is racing, and at high speeds it becomes so much more of a gamble. Having a bunch of mates in an organised Hot Pursuit is a great experience and but as long as the community keeps supporting it you'll have a blast playing against strangers. You might even find someone to compete against on your Speed Wall.

Interceptor is the most freeform mode but it definitely favours the racer, who truly dictates where the chase goes. Smart players will fake out cops by laying down a radar jammer at intersections on highways, though cops will do well to bleed a racer dry of jammers by getting them to counteract cop EMPs.

It's a sound idea to rank up somewhat before heading online as you'll be stuck with slow cars, but it's a still fun arcade racer with no technical faults. Plus, Autolog keeps track of your achievements and issues instant challenges to your friends.

“To say it's underweight is like saying **Kate Moss needs a good meal**”

VERDICT

Anaemic on modes but huge on fun, *Hot Pursuit* will serve those who go in casual or with an existing grudging rivalry.





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Gran Turismo 5 prize listing

Don't waste precious cash on cars you can earn for free!

Licenses

- **B License Gold:** TommyKaira ZZ-S '00 (S)
- **B License Silver:** Daihatsu OFC-1 Concept '07 (P)
- **B License Bronze:** Mazda Demio Sport '03 (S)
- **A License Gold:** Isuzu 4200R '89 Concept (P)
- **A License Silver:** Mazda Atenza Concept '01 (S)
- **A License Bronze:** Nissan mm-R Cup Car '01 (S)
- **IC License Gold:** Nissan GT-R Concept (Tokyo Motor Show 2001) (S)
- **IC License Silver:** Autobacs Garaiya '02 (S)
- **IC License Bronze:** Acura DN-X Concept '02 (S)
- **IB License Gold:** Honda S800 RSC Race Car '68 (S)
- **IB License Silver:** Mitsubishi HSR-II Concept '89 (S)
- **IB License Bronze:** Mazda Eunos Roadster J-LIMITED (NA) '91 (P)
- **IA License Gold:** Ford GT (No Stripe) '05 (S)
- **IA License Silver:** Land Rover Range Stormer Concept '04 (S)
- **IA License Bronze:** Dodge RAM 1500 LARAMIE Hemi Quad Cab '04 (S)
- **S License Gold:** Nissan GT-R Spec-V (GT Academy Version) '09 (P)
- **S License Silver:** Mazda MX-Crossport Concept '05 (S)
- **S License Bronze:** Opera Honda S2000 '04 (P)

Special Events

- **Karting Gran Turismo Easy:** Horn No 138
- **Karting Gran Turismo Intermediate:** Paint Colour
- **Karting Gran Turismo Advanced:** Paint Colour
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Easy:** The Indianapolis and Daytona ovals are available in Arcade Mode and Practice
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Intermediate:** None
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Advanced:** None
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Gold:** NASCAR
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Silver:** Modern Muscle Car
- **Jeff Gordon NASCAR School Bronze:** Classic Muscle Car
- **Top Gear Test Track Easy:** The Top Gear Test Track is available in Arcade mode and Practice
- **Top Gear Test Track Intermediate:** Lotus Elise Type 72 '01 (S)
- **Top Gear Test Track Advanced:** Jaguar XFR '10 (S)

- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Easy Gold:** Winter Ahrweiler In Photo mode
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Easy Silver:** Fortified walls of Ahrweiler In Photo mode

- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Easy Bronze:** Ahrweiler Street In Photo mode
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Intermediate Gold:** Nürburgring 24hrs available in Arcade and endurance training
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Intermediate Silver:** Nürburgring 4hrs available in Arcade and endurance training
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Intermediate Bronze:** Nurburgring Nordschleife available in Arcade and training
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Advanced Gold:** Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG '10 (P)
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Advanced Silver:** Mercedes-Benz C 63 AMG '08 (P)
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Advanced Bronze:** Mercedes-Benz A 160 Avangarde '98 (S)
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Expert Gold:** Mercedes-Benz SLR McLaren '03 (S)
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Expert Silver:** Mercedes-Benz SL 65 AMG (R230) '04 (S)
- **Flight Academy Mercedes-Benz AMG Expert Bronze:** Mercedes-Benz SLK 230 Kompressor '98 (S)
- **Rally Gran Turismo Easy:** Road-going rally car
- **Rally Gran Turismo Intermediate:** WRC-style rally car
- **Rally Gran Turismo Advanced:** Historic rally car

Grand Tour

- **After two events:** Photo Location (Siena, Piazza del Campo)
- **After three events:** Photo Location (Main Square of San Gimignano)
- **After four events:** Photo Location (Abbey of San Galgano)
- **Sebastien Loeb Rally Challenge Gold:** Citroën C4 WRC '08 (P)
- **Sebastien Loeb Rally Challenge Silver:** Citroën C4 Coupe 2.0 VTS '05 (P)
- **Sebastien Loeb Rally Challenge Bronze:** Citroën C3 1.6 '02 (S)
- **Vettel X1 Challenge (unlocked at level 30) Bronze:** Red Bull X1 Prototype '10 (P)

A-Spec

BEGINNER

- **Sunday Cup:** Toyota Vitz U euro Sport Edition '00 (S)
- **FF Cup:** Honda Civic SiR-II (EG) '91 (S)
- **FR challenge:** Toyota FT-86 Concept '09 (P)
- **European Classic Car Championship:** Volkswagen Kubelwagen typ82 '44 (P)
- **World Classic Car Series:** Subaru

- 360 '58 (S)
- **Light Weight K Cup:** Suzuki Wagon R RR '98 (S)
- **Vitz race:** Toyota Prius G Touring Selection (J) '03 (S)
- **World Compact:** Hommell Berlinette R/S Coupe '99 (S)
- **Japanese Classics:** Honda Z ACT '78 (S)
- **All Gold Beginner:** Gift Car Ticket Level 5

AMATEUR

- **Clubman Cup:** Honda Mugen Motul Civic Si Race '87 (S)
- **European Hot Hatch Championship:** Volkswagen Lupo GTI Cup Car (J) '03 (S)
- **NR-A Roadster Cup:** Mazda KUSABI CONCEPT '03 (S)
- **Sport Truck Race:** Daihatsu Midget II D type '98 (S)
- **Japanese 90's Challenge:** Nissan SILEIGHTY '98 (S)
- **Tous France Championship:** Citroën 2 CV Type A '54 (S)
- **Festival Italia:** Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint GTA 1600 '65 (S)
- **Classic Muscle Car Championship:** Buick Special '62 (S)
- **Supercar Nostalgia Cup:** DOME DOME-ZERO CONCEPT '78 (S)
- **All Gold Amateur:** Gift Car Ticket Level 9

PROFESSIONAL

- **Mini Challenge:** Mini Cooper 1.3i '98 (S)
- **Muscle Car Championship:** Dodge Challenger SRT8 '08 (P)
- **Supercar Festival:** Maserati Gran Turismo S '08 (P)
- **la Festa Cavillino:** Ferrari California '08 (P)
- **Pickup Truck Challenge:** Daihatsu Midget (S)
- **British Lightweight:** Triumph Spitfire 1500 '74 (S)
- **Lamborghini Exclusive:** Lamborghini Countach LP400 '74 (S)
- **GT World Championship:** Bugatti Veyron 16.4 '09 (S)



- **Lupo GTI Cup:** Volkswagen Lupo 1,4 '02 (S)
- **Sports Car Cup 80's Festival:** Toyota Celica XX 2800GT '81 (S)
- **All Gold Professional:** Gift Car Ticket Level 12

EXPERT

- **Tuning Car Grand Prix:** HPA Motorsport Stage II R32 (S)
- **Schwarzwald League A:** Opel Speedster Turbo '00 (S)
- **Historic Racing Car Cup:** Lancia STRATOS Rally Car '77 (S)
- **Trofeo Gallardo:** Lancia Delta S4 Rally Car '85 (S)
- **MR Sports Cup:** Cizeta V16T '94 (S)
- **Turbo Race:** Mitsubishi Lancer EX 1800GSR IC Turbo '83 (S)
- **Japanese Championship:** Gran Turismo 350Z RS (P)
- **Gran Turismo All Stars:** AMUSE Carbon R (R34) '04 (S)
- **Polyphony Digital Cup:** Nissan 350Z Gran Turismo 4 Ltd (Z33) '05 (S)
- **All Gold Expert:** Gift Car Ticket Level 17

EXTREME

- **NASCAR series:** Pontiac Tempest Le Mans GTO (S)
- **Schwarzwald League B:** Audi Pikes Peak Quattro Concept '03 (S)
- **Like The Wind:** Minolta 88C-V '89 (S)
- **Super GT series:** Calsonic Skyline GT-R race car '93 (S)
- **German Touring Car Championship:** BMW 2002 Turbo '73 (S)
- **Dream Car Championship:** Ford GT LM Race Car Spec II (S)
- **American Championship :** Jay Leno Tank Car '03 (S)
- **European Championship:** Audi Le Mans quattro '03 (S)
- **Formula GT series:** Caterham Fireblade (S)

ENDURANCE

- **Level 25:** Grand Valley 300km: Honda HSC '03 (S)
- **Level 26:** Roadster 4 hours: Mazda 110S '68 (S)
- **Level 27:** Laguna Seca 200 miles: Infinity Coupe Concept '06 (P)
- **Level 28:** Indianapolis 500 miles: Jaguar XJ13 Race Car '66 (P)
- **Level 30:** Suzuka 1000km: Nissan GT-R Concept LM race car (S)

- **Level 32:** Nurburgring 4h: Audi R8 LMS Race Car '09 (S)
- **Level 33:** Tsukuba 9h: HKS CT230R '08 (P)

B-Spec

BEGINNER

- **Sunday Cup:** Toyota Yaris U Euro Sport Edition (J) '00 (S)
- **FF Cup:** Honda Civic TYPE R (EK) '97 (S)
- **FR challenge:** Toyota FT-86 G Concept'10 SPORTS (P)
- **European Classic Car Championship:** Fiat 500 F '65 (P)
- **World Classic Car Series:** Volkswagen Beetle 1100 Standard (Type-11) '49 (S)
- **Light weight cup:** Daihatsu Move SR-XX 4WD'97 (S)
- **Vitz race:** Toyota Prius G '09 (P)
- **World Compact Car Race:** Autobianchi A112 Abarth '79 (S)
- **Japanese Classics:** Isuzu 117 Coupe '68 (S)
- **All Gold Beginner:** Gift Car Ticket Level 5

AMATEUR

- **Clubman Cup:** TRD Celica TRD Sports M (ZZT231) '00 (S)
- **European Hot Hatch Championship:** Volkswagen Lupo Cup Car '00 (S)
- **NR-A Roadster Cup:** Mazda Furai Concept'08 (S)
- **Sport Truck Race:** Daihatsu Midget II D type '98 (S)
- **Japanese 90's Challenge:** Mazda 323F '93 (S)
- **Classic Muscle Car Championship:** Shelby AC Cobra 427 '66 (P)
- **Festival Italia:** Alfa Romeo Giulia Sprint Speciale '63 (S)
- **Supercar Nostalgia Cup:** DMC DeLorean S2 '04 (S)
- **Tous France :** Alpine A110 1600 '73 (S)
- **All Gold Amateur:** Gift Car Ticket Level 9

PROFESSIONAL

- **Mini Challenge:** MARCOS Mini Marcos'70 (S)
- **Muscle Car Championship:** Ford Mustang GT '05 (S)
- **Supercar Festival:** Hyundai Clix Concept '01 (S)
- **Lupo GTI Cup:** Volkswagen Lupo GTI '01 (S)
- **Japanese 80's Festival:** Isuzu PIAZZA XE '81 (S)
- **la Festa Cavillino:** Ferrari F40 '92 (P)
- **British Lightweight:** Lotus Elan S1 '62 (S)
- **Lamborghini Exclusive:** Lamborghini Countach

- 25th Anniversary '88 (S)
- **GT World Championship:** Pagani Zonda R '09 (P)
- **All Gold Professional:** Gift Car Ticket Level 12

EXPERT

- **Tuning Car Grand Prix:** AEM Honda S2000 (P)
- **Schwarzwald League A:** Opel Speedster '00 (S)
- **Historic Racing Car Cup:** Alfa Romeo GIULIA T22 carrozzata da ZAGATO CN.AR750106 '65 (P)
- **Trofeo Gallardo:** Lancia Stratos '73 (S)
- **MR Sports Cup:** Cadillac CIEN Concept '02 (S)
- **Turbo Race:** Honda City Turbo II '83 (S)
- **Japanese Championship:** Opera Performance 350Z (S)
- **Gran Turismo All Stars:** NISMO 380RS Super Leggera (P)
- **Polyphony Digital Cup:** Gran Turismo Skyline GT-R '01 (S)
- **All Gold Expert:** Gift Car Ticket Level 17

EXTREME

- **Schwarzwald League B:** Nuvolari Quattro '03 (S)
- **Like The Wind:** Toyota 7 Race Car '70 (S)
- **NASCAR series:** '67 Mercury Cougar XR-7 (S)
- **European Championship :** BMW Concept 1 Series tii '07 (P)
- **Super GT series:** Toyota Castrol TOM's Supra '97 (P)
- **German Touring Car Championship:** Audi Quattro '82 (S)
- **American Championship:** Chevrolet SSR '03 (S)
- **Dream Car Championship:** GT by Citroen Race Car (P)

ENDURANCE

- **Level 25:** Grand Valley 300km: Honda DUALNOTE Concept '01 (S)
- **Level 26:** Roadster 4 hours: Mazda 110S (L10A) '67 (S)
- **Level 27:** Laguna Seca 200 miles: Camaro IROC-Z Concept '88 (S)
- **Level 28:** Indianapolis 500 miles Level 28: Ford GT40 Race Car '69 (S)
- **Level 30:** Suzuka 1000km: Nissan Fairlady Z-Concept LM Race Car (S)
- **Level 32:** Nurburgring 4h: Lexus IS F Racing Concept '08 (P)
- **Level 33:** Tsukuba 9h: Amuse S2000 GT1 '04 (P)
- **Level 35:** Le Mans 24h: Toyota GT-One Race Car (TS020) (S)



► MUST WATCH

Dinner For Schmucks

DIRECTOR: JAY ROACH **CAST:** STEVE CARELL, PAUL RUDD, ZACH GALIFIANAKIS
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY, DVD

Tim (Paul Rudd) is a rising executive who succeeds in finding the perfect guest for his boss's monthly event, the so-called "Dinner for Winners". Accepting the invite is Barry (Steve Carell) an IRS agent who has no idea that the soiree is a part of an elaborate bet that rewards the person who brings the biggest idiot to dinner with special work privileges.

Through a series of comedic errors, Barry unwittingly brings along Tim's stalker, Darla, to the dinner as well, a move that puts the young executive in a world of trouble with his current, non-crazy girlfriend.

What follows is screwball comedy that starts out as an exercise in laughing at the socially inept but turns into something much more rewarding. Even still, the script is a little undercooked, making this a three course yuck-fest, rather than a full five plate meal.

Watch this if you like *Meet the Fockers* or *Meet the Parents*

Verdict Carell is at his 'lunatic deadpan' best in this, but anyone going in expecting an *Anchorman 2* reunion of Brick and Fantana will get disappointed.

7



Schmuck: a fool, an innocent, a gullible dolt

The person who brings the biggest idiot to dinner [wins] special work privileges



Shrek Forever After

DIRECTOR MIKE MITCHELL **CAST** MIKE MYERS, EDDIE MURPHY, CAMERON DIAZ
AVAILABLE (OWN) \$24.99, 1133MB (SD)

After challenging an evil dragon, rescuing a beautiful princess and saving your in-laws' kingdom, what's an ogre to do? Well, if you're Shrek, you suddenly wind up a domesticated family man. Instead of scaring villagers away like he used to, a reluctant Shrek now agrees to autograph pitch forks.

Longing for the days when he felt like a "real ogre", Shrek is duped into signing a pact with the smooth-talking dealmaker, Rumpelstiltskin. Suddenly he finds himself in a twisted, alternate version of Far Far Away, where ogres are

hunted, Rumpelstiltskin rules and Fiona is a stranger. Decent enough, but the franchise has run its course.

Watch this if you liked the first three *Shrek* films

Verdict A fairly middling attempt at a sequel. Noticeably inferior to its predecessors.

6

PlayStation®Store

► TOP TEN

Movies on Demand



- 1 **Get Him to the Greek** Universal
- 2 **Disney's A Christmas Carol** Disney
- 3 **Iron Man 2** Paramount
- 4 **Accepted** Universal
- 5 **Traitor** Paramount
- 6 **Shrek Forever After** Dreamworks
- 7 **Half Baked** Universal
- 8 **Hot Tub Time Machine** Fox
- 9 **Grown Ups** Sony
- 10 **The Back Up Plan** Sony

Source: au.playstation.com

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Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps (M)

DIRECTORS: OLIVER STONE **CAST:** SHIA LABEOUF, MICHAEL DOUGLAS, CAREY MULLIGAN, SUSAN SARANDON **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Greed is good and so is this sequel. As the global economy teeters on the brink of disaster, a young Wall Street trader (LaBeouf) partners up with disgraced former Wall Street corporate raider Gordon Gekko (Douglas).

Their collective mission: to alert the financial community to the coming doom, and to find out who was responsible for the untimely death of the young trader's mentor.

Is this stock worth watching? After two decades Gordon Gekko isn't any less mesmerizing. Even still, we'd yell "rent, rent, rent", rather than "buy, buy, buy".

Watch this if you like *Wall Street*, the Benjamins

Verdict Good as sequels go, but with such a fine cast and director we expected much more.

6



The Sorcerer's Apprentice (M)

DIRECTOR: JON TURTELTAUB **CAST:** NICOLAS CAGE, JAY BARUCHEL, MONICA BELLUCCI **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

Balthazar Blake (Nicolas Cage) is a modern-day sorcerer. In battling the forces of evil in Manhattan, specifically his arch-nemesis, Maxim Horvath (Alfred Molina). Realising he's in need of some backup, Blake divines the name of a suitable apprentice. This turns out to be Dave Stutler (Jay Baruchel), a physics student whom Balthazar enlists as a reluctant protégé. As you can imagine, this kicks off an epic, spellcaster-in-training montage.

Though it has a likable cast and loads of CGI shazam, all but the least demanding viewers will find *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* to be an anemic concoction. Those of you thinking of straying away from the Hogwarts curriculum should just stay in school.

Watch this if you liked fantasy CGI, hadoukens

Verdict A Jerry Bruckheimer version of *Harry Potter* that lacks narrative depth.

5



Easy A (M)

DIRECTOR: WILL GLUCK **CAST:** EMMA STONE, PENN BADGLEY, AMANDA BYNES **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

In this charming, critically acclaimed tale of rumors and reputation, Olive (Stone), an average high school student, sees her below-the-radar existence turn around overnight once she decides to use the school's gossip grapevine to advance her social standing (by pretending to be "the school bicycle"). Now her classmates are turning against her and the school board is becoming concerned.

With the support of her hilariously idiosyncratic parents and her long-time crush, Olive must take on her new identity and crush the rumor mill.

Surprisingly, this manages to be one of the best teen flicks since *10 Things I Hate About You*. The dialogue is snappy and intelligent (thanks to a parallel drawn with *The Scarlet Letter*) and we dug the endless '80s teen movie references. Good stuff.

Watch this if you like videogames and/or comics

Verdict Superbly balances a moral message with some laughs. Stone puts in a great performance.

8



Metalocalypse Season 3 (MA15+)

PRODUCERS: BRENDON SMALL **CAST:** BRENDON SMALL, TOMMY BLACHA, MARK HAMILL **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY, DVD

The self-absorbed man-babes of Dethklok continue their downward spiral into the pits of decadence, depravity, and degeneration, even as their fortunes soar ever higher. Now residing in a rocket-powered Gothic castle nestled in the clouds, the appetite of the world's mightiest heavy metal band for selling out is matched only by their borderline supernatural ability to bring death and disfigurement to those closest to them.

Returning side characters include Dr. Rockzo, the despicable rock-&-roll clown (he does c-c-cocaine). If any band can bring about the end of the world, it's Dethklok. Watch this, today.

Watch this if you like *Throwing up the horns or raising your goblet of rock*. Also, *This Is Spinal Tap*

Verdict Even in a half-hour format, *Metalocalypse's* power to titillate and appal is still immense.

9



Full Metal Panic Fumoffu (M)

DIRECTOR: YASUHIRO TAKEMOTO **CAST:** SATSUKI YUKINO, TOMOKAZU SEKI, TOMOKO KANEDA **AVAILABLE ON:** BLU-RAY

The second self-contained story arc of *Full Metal Panic* veers away from the more serious, cyber-punk stylings of the rest of the series, and instead piles on the gags. For those who came in late, Sousuke is a battle-hardened teen mercenary assigned to monitor and protect Kaname, a buxom high school girl unwittingly mired in the sort of conspiracy that Tom Clancy would write about if he was obsessed with giant robots, undies, and tits. Throw in some sexual deviants and a bulletproof Fat Cat suit, and you've got comedy gold. Discerning fans will have snapped up the lunacy of *Fumoffu* on DVD long ago, anime newcomers really need to make time for this.

Watch this if you liked bulletproof Fat Cat suits, giant robots, undies... you get the picture

Verdict This re-release offers noobs the chance to get one of the funniest animes money can buy.

8



Birdy the Mighty: Decode (M)

DIRECTOR: KAZUI AKANE **CAST:** MIYU IRINO, SAEKO CHIBA **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

Alien criminals are mingling amongst the oblivious masses of Earth, indulging in heinous carnivorous impulses, fermenting conspiracies and unrest. Hunting these fiends is Birdy, a space cop with super-powers that are matched only by her boundless enthusiasm.

Things get a little complicated for Birdy when an unlucky high school kid is killed before her eyes. Rather than let him perish, she copies his mind into her own shape-shifting shell. With one body between the two of them, they now lead a ridiculous, privacy-free double life, balancing crime-fighting with high-school drama. Also: boobies galore and a swimsuit costume that leaves very, very little to the imagination.

Watch this if you liked a sci-fi nature which is slightly more serious than *Ginban Kaleidoscope*

Verdict Above-average escapist sci-fi fare, with intriguing plots and high-quality animation.

8

► MUST WATCH

Tron: Legacy

(PG)

DIRECTOR: JOSEPH KOSINSKI **CAST:** JEFF BRIDGES, GARRETT HEDLUND, OLIVIA WILDE, BRUCE BOXLEITNER **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

Do you love special effects, great production values and a thumping soundtrack? You'll make a soggy saliva patch on your T-shirt when you watch *Tron: Legacy* in that case. If you're looking for emotional connections between characters, or a follow up that makes as much of an impact as the original, look elsewhere.

Legacy is the sequel to 1982's cult hit *Tron*, which was remarkably futuristic with its cast glowing with blue and orange lines along their bodies, and the filmmakers interpretation of what a computer network might look like if it was made real.

Entrepreneur Kevin Flynn (Bridges) made it out of The Grid at the end of *Tron*, he went back in a number of times trying to create something special for mankind. On the brink of this discovery, he disappears leaving his seven-year-old son Sam in the care of his grandparents. Cut forward 20 years and rebellious Sam (Hedlund) stumbles on a way into The Grid, finding his old man and the world he's created.

Problem is, the program Flynn, Snr. created to help create the world, Clu, has taken control of The Grid and has plans to capture Sam. The creation has become the leader of its own destiny.

Legacy is very much about the action and its style rather than character development – what you see is what you get, and the excellent Jeff Bridges works hard to explain parts of the plot in sporadic flashbacks. This isn't a film that'll stick with you when you leave the cinema, but while you're there you should soak up the excellent visuals and epic soundtrack.

In the end it winds up as great entertainment.

Watch this if you like *Cloverfield*, *District 9*



"I'm going to force quit the shit out of you!"

"*Legacy* is very much about the action and the style rather than character development"



"You mean I gotta fight Marky Mark AND Batman?!"

The Fighter

(TBA)

DIRECTOR: DAVID O. RUSSELL **CAST:** MARK WAHLBERG, CHRISTIAN BALE, MELISSA LEO, AMY ADAMS **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

If you're ever looking for an actor who can bulk up for one movie and then shed kilos like a houseful of *Biggest Loser* contestants, call Christian Bale. Any semblance of handsomeness has been eradicated as he plays Dicky Eklund, a former boxing champ who was most famous for fighting Sugar Ray Leonard in 1978.

His younger half-brother, Micky Ward (Wahlberg) is the star of the show, and he puts his all into conveying the boxer's tenacity to move out of his sibling's shadow. Dicky was riding on a

lot of local pride, but began a new battle with his addiction to crack cocaine.

So Micky is the hope of the family, though he doesn't get the love and support he needs. His mother Alice (Leo) is manipulative, his drug-addict brother is hopelessly absorbed in his own world, though there is a shining light in Charlene (Adams), a bartender in Micky's downbeat town.

Wahlberg worked hard to get this movie made – he even set up a boxing ring inside his house, training for four years. It shows. Check it out.



"What ho, old bean?"

The King's Speech

(M)

DIRECTOR: TOM HOOPER **CAST:** COLIN FIRTH, GEOFFREY RUSH, HELENA BONHAM CARTER, TIMOTHY SPALL, DEREK JACOBI **IN CINEMAS:** NOW

King George VI (Firth) had a fairly wretched stutter, and his ascension to the throne was sudden – his older brother Edward VIII (Pearce) decided to spend his life with an American divorcee rather than continue as King, thus offloading the job onto 'Bertie'. Public speaking was a nightmare for him because of his impediment, and was considered unfit to be king.

After trying various cures and finding no success, his wife Elizabeth (Bonham Carter) who would later become Queen takes him to see an Australian elocutionist Lionel Logue (Rush). It's the relationship between Lionel and Bertie that gives *The King's Speech* its soul.

It's a damn good film, and while you might be put off by the prospect of a period piece you should just cast your doubts aside.



In-depth: classic • touch • shuffle • nano

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index

ABOUT THE INDEX

Check out our handy index of all the PS3 titles we feel you should play (and some you shouldn't). Please note: scores are a reflection of a game's comparative quality at the time of release and will not change - but the index may be updated as titles age or are superseded by new games.

ACTION

50 Cent: Blood on the Sand 7
SWORDFISH STUDIOS
So dumb it's dangerously good. Better than it sounds.

Army of Two 7
EA MONTREAL
Solid co-op thrills make up for its wasted potential.

Army of Two: The 40th Day 7
EA MONTREAL
Still bone-headed but a lot tighter and more fun than the first.

Avatar 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
If you've got a 3D TV, buy it. If not, it's too derivative to bother.

RECOMMENDED Bayonetta 9
PLATINUM GAMES
It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy and weird.

Bionic Commando 7
GRIN
There are some great moments, but they're few and far between.

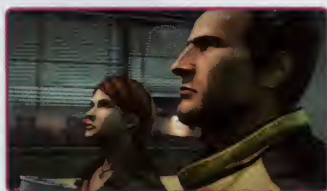
The Bourne Conspiracy 7
HIGH MOON STUDIOS
Great presentation and vibe, samey action. Stylish, superficial.

The Club 8
BIZARRE CREATIONS
Original, compulsive and fun.

Damnation 3
BLUE OMEGA ENTERTAINMENT
Uninspired level design, broken gameplay.

Dark Sector 7
DIGITAL EXTREMES
Solid but hardly perfect.

Dark Void 6
AIRTIGHT GAMES
Uninspiring graphics, lacklustre sound and dull, dull combat.



DEAD RISING 2 9
DEVELOPER: BLUE CASTLE GAMES
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-4

"You'll wear a stupid grin pretty much from start to finish and it's a riot in co-op. A must-play. The satisfaction of literally cutting down thousands of zombies with anything you can pick up is its only hook - but it works a treat."

Dead to Rights: Retribution 6
VOLATILE GAMES
Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Needs more dog.

Devil May Cry 4 7
CAPCOM
Memorable bosses but too much backtracking spoils things.

Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard 6
VICIOUS CYCLE SOFTWARE
Great concept and nice parody, but basic one-play stuff.

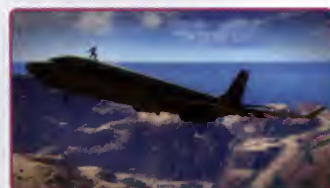
Front Mission Evolved 7
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
Likable but limited mech-based combat.

Genji: Days of the Blade 7
GAME REPUBLIC
Flashy graphics, giant enemy crabs, piss-poor plodding gameplay.

RECOMMENDED Ghostbusters: The Video Game 7
TERMINAL REALITY / THREEWAVE SOFTWARE
Robust, charming and impeccably presented.

Iron Man 7
SECRET LEVEL
Filled to the brim with bugs. Substandard.

John Woo Presents: Stranglehold 7
MIDWAY CHICAGO
Packs frantic *Max Payne*-lite fun.



JUST CAUSE 2 9
DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS
PLAYERS: 1
"Parachutes. Grappling hooks. Stripper zeppelins. Why don't you already own this game? If you can dream it, you can do it in this insane action game."

Kane & Lynch: Dead Men 6
IO INTERACTIVE
A let down. Gets close to greatness before crashing back down.

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days 7
IO INTERACTIVE
Michael Mann/YouTube visuals? Great. The game? Average.

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition 6
CAPCOM / K2 LLC
A half-arsed port you'd never bother with.

Lost Planet 2 7
CAPCOM
Slim pickings for solo players but multiplayer buffs may dig it.

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames 8
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Weak in many areas but has fun in spades. *The Saboteur* does it better, though.

Mobile Suit Gundam: Target in Sight 3
NAMCO BANDAI
A rubber Godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

Ninja Gaiden Sigma 7
TEAM NINJA
A treasure trove of gaming goodness. And violence.

RECOMMENDED Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 5
TEAM NINJA
A sexy and rock hard title but the gore's been cut.

RECOMMENDED Prototype 9
RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT
A simple superhero kill-fest but a truckload of guilty fun.

RECOMMENDED Red Faction: Guerrilla 3
VOLITION, INC.
The best destruction effects ever, hands down.

Saints Row 2 7
VOLITION, INC.
Puerile, mean-spirited and technically outclassed, if you care.

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation 6
SLANT SIX GAMES
A sturdy effort that fails to excite.

Terminator Salvation 4
GRIN / HALCYON GAMES
An abysmal failure. Short, filled with glitches.

Time Crisis: Razing Storm 6
NAMCO
Simple, short light gun fare. Ignore the new first-person shooter mode, it's awful.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2 8
RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT
A tense, realistic shooter. Cool gadgets.

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen 6
LUXOFLUX
A day of undemanding fun but no more.

Transformers: War for Cybertron 7
HIGH MOON
Good multiplayer, and that's about it.

RECOMMENDED Vanquish 8
PLATINUM GAMES
Whip quick third-person thrills. Play it now.

Wanted: Weapons of Fate 6
GRIN
Designed only to appeal to mentally-subnormal 11-year-olds.

RECOMMENDED Warhawk 9
INCOGNITO ENTERTAINMENT / SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
Furiously addictive. Tighter than a bull's arse on light night.

WET 8
A2M
Tonnes of grindhouse style, little substance.

Wheelman 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - NEWCASTLE / TIGON STUDIOS
Rubbish low-speed handling and underdone throughout.

X-Men Origins: Wolverine 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
A head slicin' chest beater of a slash 'em up.

ACTION-ADVENTURE

3D Dot Game Heroes 7
FROM SOFTWARE
If you pine for the past this should keep you entertained.

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom 7
GAME REPUBLIC
A feel-good romp that's a little old-fashioned.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A landmark, though slightly dated now.

RECOMMENDED Assassin's Creed II 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
When everything gels correctly it casually murders its predecessor.

ESSENTIAL Assassin's Creed Brotherhood 10
UBISOFT MONTREAL
The pinnacle of the series so far, and the multiplayer is outstanding.

RECOMMENDED Batman: Arkham Asylum 8
ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
Really delivers the goods. Best Batman game ever. Best superhero game full stop.

RECOMMENDED Brütal Legend 9
DOUBLE FINE PRODUCTIONS
Must play. If God gave rock 'n roll to us then it's settled: Tim Schafer is God.

RECOMMENDED Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 9
MERCURY STEAM
Easily one of the best games of 2010.

Clash of the Titans 4
GAME REPUBLIC
A piss-poor action game lacking in every way.

RECOMMENDED Dante's Inferno 8
VISCERAL GAMES
Derivative but well-produced and good fun.

RECOMMENDED Darksiders 8
VIGIL GAMES
It'll test your patience but persevere and your satisfaction will swell.

RECOMMENDED Dead Space 9
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Super tense. The future of survival horror.

Demon's Souls 7
FROM SOFTWARE
Those looking for an extreme challenge may have met their match.

RECOMMENDED Enslaved 8
NINJA THEORY
A fun platforming romp based on the same classic story as TV's *Monkey* was.

Fairytale Fights 7
PLAYLOGIC GAME FACTORY
Quirky and sadistic but too simplistic.

Folklore 8
GAME REPUBLIC
Original and surprising with moments of genius.

The Godfather: The Don's Edition 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
It made for a decent PS2 game but skip this port. It's not worth it.

The Godfather II 6
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Starts as a decent crime caper but alienates fans of the film. Definitely no real reason to play this over *Mafia II*.

Go ninja, go ninja, go ninja... gone



Ex-Team Ninja head Tomonobu Itagaki is the closest thing games development will get to a loud-mouth rock 'n roller. As well as having a set of katana in his office (made by his father), he develops games when drunk. "Of course, there are ups and downs, waves, of how I drink in terms of the amount, but it's a long period of time... I think I had better ideas when I was drinking whisky."

It's an abbreviation, meaning 'play well'

Telltale Games' LEGO titles are consistently fun. Still, the real stuff's even more amazing.

Approximately seven LEGO sets are sold every second, and it would take 40,000,000,000 bricks to reach the moon. Also, there are on average 62 bricks for every person on Earth.



ESSENTIAL **God of War III**
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO
A showcase. Old-fashioned arse-kicking, astonishing visuals.

RECOMMENDED **God of War Collection**
SCE SANTA MONICA STUDIO / BLUEPOINT GAMES
Age has not dimished its impact. Purchase immediately.

Golden Axe: Beast Rider
SECRET LEVEL
Destined for the chopping block. No co-op? Boo!

ESSENTIAL **Grand Theft Auto IV**
ROCKSTAR NORTH
The technical scope and scale of *GTAIV* dwarfs all. Remarkable.



GRAND THEFT AUTO: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1-16
"Superior to *GTAIV* in many ways with two new and more interesting single-player campaigns, expanded multiplayer options and a vast array of new weapons and vehicles. Explosive shotgun? Yes please."

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince
EA BRIGHT LIGHT STUDIO
Play the first 30 minutes and you've played the whole game.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
EA UK
The chore-like structure will bore most.

Heavenly Sword
NINJA THEORY
Slick graphics and refined combat. A bit short though.

Hellboy: The Science of Evil
KROME STUDIOS
Sluggish and generic. Ordinary on all counts. A shame, really.

RECOMMENDED **inFamous**
SUCKER PUNCH PRODUCTIONS
A superpowered take on the urban crime-fighting sandbox.

LEGO Batman
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Sound and faithful, but the formula is getting a bit old.

LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4
TRAVELLER'S TALES
The most thorough LEGO universe yet. More exploration than combat.

RECOMMENDED **LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures**
TRAVELLER'S TALES
Happiness and wonder overcame us with this joyous adaptation.

Lost: Via Domus
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Some solid adventuring, but the voice acting is rubbish.

RECOMMENDED **Mafia II**
2K CZECH
Its attention to detail, presentation and sound is to be admired.

ESSENTIAL **Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots**
KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
Yes, it's as much a movie as it is a game, but the production values are insane. A titan amongst games. Epic.

Overlord: Raising Hell
4J STUDIOS / TRIUMPH STUDIOS
A bundle of fun, mixing tactics with a juvenile love of chaos.

Overlord II
TRIUMPH STUDIOS
Refined gameplay and more jokes but control quirks persist.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End
Eurocom
Looks the part but unfortunately it doesn't feel or play the part.

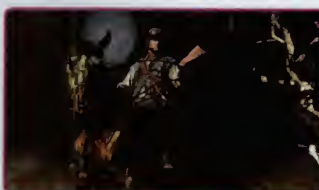
Planet 51
PYRO STUDIOS
Like a dry cracker for dinner. Bland and boring, and no fun.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Worth your time but better swordplay could've really helped.

Prison Break
ZOOTFLY
A below-average stealth game cobbled together on the cheap.

RECOMMENDED **Ratchet & Clank Future: A Crack in Time**
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Reinvigorates the genre without reinventing the wheel.

RECOMMENDED **Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction**
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A big, wild, good ol' fashioned adventure.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
PUBLISHER: ROCKSTAR **PLAYERS:** 1-16

"A sweeping epic that's among the best games we've ever played. We're not lying when we say it's better than *GTAIV* in a lot of crucial areas."

RECOMMENDED **Resident Evil 5**
CAPCOM
A grand, bloody adventure but the inventory system remains bad.

RECOMMENDED **The Saboteur**
PANDEMIC STUDIOS
Charming and packed with action. Great, unique visual style.

SAW II: Flesh & Blood
ZOMBIE INC.
Lacks finesse but boasts some decent puzzles.

Silent Hill Homecoming
DOUBLE HELIX GAMES
New combat system is good, but lacks the cerebral chills.

The Simpsons Game
EA REDWOOD SHORES
Short, but the cromulent visuals embiggen the experience.

Sonic the Hedgehog
SONIC TEAM
There are cheaper ways to get a spare Blu-ray case.

Sonic Unleashed
SONIC TEAM
Hey! It's the least awful Sonic game in years!

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
BEENOX
Looks great – but why have we gone back to swinging from invisible hooks in the sky?

Spider-Man: Web of Shadows
TREYARCH / SHABA GAMES
Swift and tidy but not exactly deep.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
LUCASARTS
Fails to use its idea to maximum effect.

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
LUCASARTS
Gets a point-and-a-bit for hour that it is long. Technically superior but still rough.

RECOMMENDED **Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent**
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Obsessive and gripping, online and off.

Toy Story 3
AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
Cute, simple, and charming as hell.

ESSENTIAL **Uncharted: Drake's Fortune**
NAUGHTY DOG
Awesome plot, awesome graphics, awesome action. This owns.

ESSENTIAL **Uncharted 2: Among Thieves**
NAUGHTY DOG
This is the reason Hollywood is so worried about videogames.

Viking: Battle for Asgard
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
Slow attacks and weak visuals but it has its appeal.

Yakuza 3
AMUSEMENT VISION
Lots to do but the slow pace grates.

ADVENTURE

RECOMMENDED **Heavy Rain**
QUANTIC DREAM
Not quite a revolution but very clever and very well-crafted.

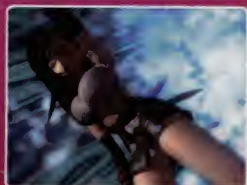
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust
TEAM17 SOFTWARE
An amazing new low for this generation.

FIGHTING

Battle Fantasia
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
A nice curiosity but, seriously, get *Super Street Fighter IV*.



THE BEST PSone CLASSICS ON PlayStation®Store



FINAL FANTASY VII

DEVELOPER: SQUARE
PLAYERS: 1
The RPG upon which all other RPGs are generally judged, *Final Fantasy VII* is a modern classic and a worthy part of every credible videogame library.



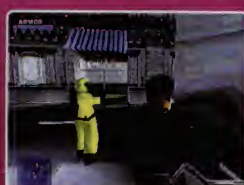
DRIVER

DEVELOPER: REFLECTIONS
INTERACTIVE PLAYERS: 1
The original *Driver* hit PlayStation like a blast of fresh air. Hectic car chases through 3D cities may old-hat now but when *Driver* debuted it was like nothing we'd seen.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

DEVELOPER: NAUGHTY DOG
PLAYERS: 1
The best platformer on any PlayStation. As far as old-school run and jump action in purpose-built levels goes, *this* is the zenith.



SYPHON FILTER

DEVELOPER: EIDETIC
PLAYERS: 1
If you still think *Syphon Filter* was a MGS rip-off you're misled. Play it again and tell us this awesome series doesn't deserve a PS3 comeback.



MEDIEVIL

DEVELOPER: SCE STUDIO
CAMBRIDGE PLAYERS: 1
Speaking of games that deserve a PS3 comeback, where's *Sir Dan*? *Fantasy hack 'n' slash* meets the supernatural. *Medievil* still does it better than most since.



inhouse

FEATURED STUDIO OF THE MONTH

Criteriongames

Criterion Games

LOCATION: GUILDFORD, UK FOUNDED: 1993 BEST KNOWN FOR: BURNOUT 3

Have you ever wanted to find the goose that keeps laying the gold eggs? Chances are it's called 'Criterion'. Formed in the mid-'90s Criterion's most notable success didn't come from a particular game, but a game-making tool called RenderWare that it developed when it was part-owned by Canon.

"When computers became more powerful and were throwing around 3D models," explains Matt Webster, Senior Producer of *Need For Speed Hot Pursuit*, "You needed either staff or engineering capability to deliver. It was difficult. What happened was that Criterion made a toolset to accelerate whatever the development might be."

"It was designed as a set of tools and tech that could make it easier for devs to engineer richer experiences and to push the boundaries of what had been seen before. From a RenderWare point of view it was made to render stuff on screen, then add a suite of tools to make what became game development easier."

Criterion's RenderWare tech wasn't a case of the cart leading the horse, but the cart and horse rollicking along together at the same brisk pace. RenderWare was used by Rockstar for its mega-successful GTA games and *Max Payne 2* on PS2, as well as *Tony*

Hawk 3 and 4, *PES 2* and dozens more high-profile games.

Most of this came after their success with the first game in the *Burnout* series. *Burnout 2* refined the concept, but *Burnout 3* was the game that cemented its relationship with EA, that now fully owns the studio.

"It's all about accessibility," continues Webster. "People say 'I don't normally like racing games but I do like *Burnout*'. That's why we've been successful. Other games make crashing a failure state, but why? It's awesome! It's exciting, it's action, it's intensity, so why would that be a failure state?"

It all ties into the Criterion philosophy. "Accessibility, high action, favouring the player – in *Black*, if I can have fun with a gun in an empty room then we're half way there – and being highly connected." Those four characteristics define a Criterion game, whatever it may be.

So what's next? They've had an excellent run of racing games and while Webster admits "Move is really exciting, but I'm not going to give you specifics. Anything's open. Maybe not RPGs, and the world doesn't need another shooter right now."

Whatever it is, you can expect it to be golden.

RECOMMENDED BlazBlue: Continuum Shift 9
ARC SYSTEM WORKS
Still wilder, wackier and noisier than anything else on PS3.

Def Jam: Icon 8
EA CHICAGO
Pretty and highly kinetic. A bit cumbersome.

FaceBreaker 7
EA CANADA
Great look but very unbalanced.

The Fight: Lights Out 5
COLDWOOD INTERACTIVE
The Move controls don't feel as organic as we'd hoped they would. Sorry Danny Trejo.

The King of Fighters XII 3
SNK PLAYMORE
Grey, old and well beyond retirement. Irredeemable.

Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe 7
MIDWAY GAMES
A fun game with mass appeal but not very technical.

RECOMMENDED Soulcalibur IV 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Phenomenal, but will let down those expecting a revolution.

RECOMMENDED Street Fighter IV 10
CAPCOM / DIMPS
A tight-fisted gut blow of wow, but you'd grab *Super Street Fighter IV* instead now.



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV 10
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM/DIMPS
PUBLISHER: THQ PLAYERS: 1-2
"With the 'vanilla' versions vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay – but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price – *Super Street Fighter IV* belongs in everyone's collection."

RECOMMENDED Tekken 6 8
NAMCO BANDAI
Easy to play, with the biggest roster ever. Feels a bit old, though.

TNA Impact! 6
MIDWAY STUDIOS - LOS ANGELES
Good, arcade-style biff but there's not enough content.

Virtua Fighter 5 8
SEGA-AM2
As hardcore as fighting games get.

WWE Legends of WrestleMania 6
YUKE'S
Gets by on retro charm but feels absolutely ancient.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010 8
YUKE'S
If the soap-drama of the WWE's your thing, welcome to nirvana.

FLYING

Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A simple aerial blaster. Flawed but fun.

Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII 6
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Solid, varied, but not quite the ace of aces.

Heroes Over Europe 7
TRANSMISSION GAMES
A little rough but not bad. IL-2 is much better though.



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY 8
DEVELOPER: GALJIN ENTERTAINMENT
PUBLISHER: AFA PLAYERS: 1-16
"Head turning visuals, astonishing attention to detail, brilliant sound effects and stacks of ratta-tat action all combine in this truly surprisingly awesome aerial combat game. To be honest it's the best flight game we've ever played."

Lair 5
FACTOR 5
It feels rushed and unfinished. Deeply disappointing.

Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 7
UBISOFT ROMANIA
Tight and accessible but a bit sterile.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 8
UBISOFT ROMANIA
A top gun successor. More detail, better mission design.

MUSIC

AC/DC Live: Rock Band Track Pack 7
HARMONIX
Bare-bones stuff but the music is worth it. Fully exportable.

THE BEST PSP GAMES



GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY STORIES
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR LEEDS
PLAYERS: 1-6

This is about as remarkable as gaming gets on a handheld console. A fully-fledged 3D GTA, just like the PS2 versions, on PSP – and it feels absolutely brilliant. Also? Phil Collins is in it. No, we're totally serious.



MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM UNITE
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-4

Monster Hunter is a true system seller in its native Japan and it deserves that sort of awareness here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to and will reward you in spades if you're able to put the effort in.



WIPEOUT PULSE
DEVELOPER: SCE LIVERPOOL
PLAYERS: 1-8

Beautiful and weighted just right, it's a futurist's wet dream. There's a reason *Wipeout* just works – and this is proof. Depending on which day of the week you ask us this just pips the likes of *Burnout Legends* and *Gran Turismo* for best racing game on PSP.



METAL GEAR SOLID: PEACE WALKER
DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
PLAYERS: 1-6

A proper, well-produced and thought-out *Metal Gear*; this is a must-have. The story's great and the action is totally addictive. We can't stress it enough: buy this game, and a PSP if you must. This a title that no gamer should miss.



GOD OF WAR: GHOST OF SPARTA
DEVELOPER: READY AT DAWN
PLAYERS: 1

Stupidly better than the already excellent *Chains of Olympus*, this still has fantastic graphics and tighter-than-hades gameplay. If you're a fan of the series, this is a crucial part of the saga you really shouldn't miss.

Band Hero
NEVERSOFT
Robust but the over-zealous censorship grates a lot.

RECOMMENDED The Beatles: Rock Band
HARMONIX
Outstanding. This is a tribute like no other.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero
FREESTYLEGAMES
Tough to write off as a gimmick.

RECOMMENDED DJ Hero 2
FREESTYLEGAMES
Some great improvements and some excellent, unique mixes.

RECOMMENDED Green Day: Rock Band
HARMONIX
Very good. Up there with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and *Guitar Hero: Metallica*.

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock
NEVERSOFT
The last *GH* with a mostly decent soundtrack.

Guitar Hero World Tour
NEVERSOFT
Good, but missing crucial elements that make *Rock Band* better.

Guitar Hero 5
NEVERSOFT
Improving, but the hipster tracklist is a dud.

RECOMMENDED Guitar Hero: Metallica
NEVERSOFT
The best in the series since *Guitar Hero III*.

Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits
BEENOX
Great past *GH* tracks with full band support. Seriously though, why wasn't it just DLC?

Guitar Hero: Van Halen
UNDERGROUND DEVELOPMENT
Only buy this cheap: \$90 is an insult. USA *GH5* buyers got it as a free bonus.

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock
NEVERSOFT
Functional, but it just isn't evolving at the same rate as its peers.

LEGO Rock Band
HARMONIX / TRAVELLER'S TALES
Cute. Fewer tracks than we'd like though.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band
HARMONIX
The best party game ever, until the sequels.

ESSENTIAL Rock Band 2
HARMONIX
The best music game series around.

RECOMMENDED Rock Band 3
HARMONIX
Improvements to the interface abound, but it's only as good as your existing DLC library.

SingStar
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Will last as long as the PS3 with so much DLC.

PARTY

EyePet
SCE LONDON STUDIO
Harmless fun but pointless for adults.

Hail to the Chimp
WIDELOAD GAMES
Want to lose friends? Play this with them.

Kung Fu Rider
JAPAN STUDIO
Waggle-based bullshit. A terrible example of a Move game.

Scene It? Bright Lights! Big Screen!
A2M
Vanilla compared to the past Xbox versions.

The Shoot
COHORT STUDIOS
A good Move rail shooter. Cool presentation.

RECOMMENDED Sports Champions
ZINDAGI GAMES
Despite a few quirks this is the must-have Move title.

Start the Party!
SUPERMASSIVE GAMES
Great to keep the rugrats amused for a while.

PUZZLE/PLATFORMER

RECOMMENDED Katamari Forever
NAMCO BANDAI
Joyfulness, digitally realised. Infectious.

LittleBigPlanet
MEDIA MOLECULE
Innovative and never-ending. It's time to hit the sack!

RACING

Baja: Edge of Control
2XL GAMES
A little bland but brilliant handling and sound.

Blur
BIZARRE CREATIONS
A race to power-ups rather than a racer with power-ups.

RECOMMENDED Burnout Paradise
CRITERION GAMES
Stunning and sharp but we miss the dedicated Crash Mode.

RECOMMENDED Colin McRae: DiRT
CODEMASTERS
Plenty of real rally action, unlike its sequel.

Colin McRae: DiRT 2
CODEMASTERS
Flashy and drives fine but it's style over substance here.

Ferrari Challenge
EUTECHNYX
Serious and robust but it won't trouble *Gran Turismo 5*.



F1 2010
DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1-12
"The best pure racing game we've played in many, many years. The presentation is spot-on, the weather effects are stunning and the racing is frantic and realistic. Want a racing game that will send your knuckles white? This is it. Acquire immediately."

Fuel
ASOBO STUDIOS
Huge, but bugged, boring and undercooked.

Full Auto 2: Battlelines
PSEUDO INTERACTIVE
Fun but shallow. You'd take *Split/Second* instead these days.

Gran Turismo 5 Prologue
POLYPHONY DIGITAL
An appetising taster but not the full course.

Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights
JUICE GAMES
Stout mechanics, glossy options. Not too deep though.

Midnight Club: Los Angeles
ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
Visually weak at times. Great customisation and seamless racing.

RECOMMENDED ModNation Racers
UNITED FRONT GAMES
An incredible package. Creating is even more fun than racing.

MotoGP 09/10
MONUMENTAL GAMES
Simulation freaks will want to veer well away.

Prepare the dool bucket

Matt Webster from Criterion told us about the best thing ever when producing *Hot Pursuit*. "One of our staff members was in London, and in the Grosvenor Hotel car park there was a Veyron, a Zonda Cinque, two Bentley Continental Super Sports, and a Lamborghini LP640 Super Veloce... What's awesome is that they're all lined up and in front of them it says 'no parking'."



RECOMMENDED MotorStorm
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Fast, hard and dirty. In 2007 it was everything a racing game should be. Things have come on a bit since then though.

MotorStorm: Pacific Rift
EVOLUTION STUDIOS
Boasts splitscreen but visually it hasn't come on far enough.

MX vs. ATV: Untamed
RAINBOW STUDIOS
Feels like a PS2 port with no next gen goodness.

MX vs. ATV Reflex
RAINBOW STUDIOS
Motocross freaks will love it. Needed a little more zest though.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed Hot Pursuit
CRITERION
Smooth, compelling and absolutely beautiful arcade racing.

RECOMMENDED Need for Speed: SHIFT
SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
Superbly presented and a blast to play. Feels fast.

Need for Speed: Undercover
EA BLACK BOX
Technically faulty, and adds nothing good since *Most Wanted*.

RECOMMENDED Pure
BLACK ROCK STUDIOS
Still one of the best arcade racers on the market.

RECOMMENDED Race Driver: GRID
CODEMASTERS
A born-to-rage racing rebel. Good, but lacks the *Race Driver* vintage, despite the name.

SBK-X: Superbike World Championship
MILESTONE
Inches in front of *MotoGP 09/10*. Purists may still hate on it.

Sega Rally
SEGA RACING STUDIO
Familiar, old-school arcade fun.

Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing
SUMO DIGITAL
Fun but shallow. Copies from the best but missing a crucial spark.

RECOMMENDED Split/Second
BLACK ROCK STUDIO
Doesn't feel as sharp as *Burnout* but it's a true challenger.

Stuntman: Ignition
PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT
The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour long orgasm.

SuperCar Challenge
EUTECHNYX
Admirable effort but feels a little bland despite the exotic cars.

Superstars V8: Next Challenge
MILESTONE
An improvement but it's still more shallow than it thinks it is.

RECOMMENDED WRC
MILESTONE
Drab graphics, imperfect sound, but a joyfully robust driving model.

RPG/ACTION RPG

Alpha Protocol
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
Great concept, poor execution. Also? Worst male lead ever.

Cross Edge
COMPILE HEART
Every benchmark of excellence has been missed. Offensive.

RECOMMENDED Dragon Age: Origins
BIOWARE
As long as it is enthralling. Essential for patient fantasy freaks.

ESSENTIAL The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion
BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
Simply put: awesome.



FALLOUT 3
DEVELOPER: BETHESDA PUBLISHER: NAMCO BANDAI PARTNERS PLAYERS: 1
"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing it into a post-apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly."

RECOMMENDED Fallout: New Vegas
OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
A great ride but you've been on it before.

RECOMMENDED Final Fantasy XIII
SQUARE ENIX
Spellbinding graphics and 50+ hours of action.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Colourful, action-packed, co-op dungeon crawling.

Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2
VICARIOUS VISIONS
A compelling romp but the button-mashing play needs updating.

Nier
CAVIA UNRELEASED
Decent enough, but there are richer experiences elsewhere.

Resonance of Fate
TRI-ACE
Deep, but also wordy, clunky and ugly.

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
ASCARON ENTERTAINMENT
Gigantic, but feels very slapped together.

Valkyria Chronicles
SEGA WOV
Strategy and RPG heads alike should not miss this game.

White Knight Chronicles
LEVEL-5 / SCE JAPAN STUDIO
Not a great way to spend 30-or-so hours.

SHOOTER

RECOMMENDED Aliens vs. Predator 9
REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
One of the best movie-inspired titles ever. Beyond brutal.

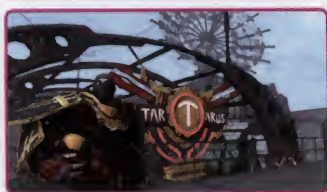
RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Destructible environments and humour. Together at last.

RECOMMENDED Battlefield: Bad Company 2 8
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A top-tier shooter but the single-player mischief is M.I.A.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 8
IRRATIONAL GAMES / 2K MARIN
14 months too late, but this is grown-up gaming at its best.

RECOMMENDED BioShock 2 9
2K MARIN / DIGITAL EXTREMES / 2K AUSTRALIA
Doesn't match the original's plot.

BlackSite: Area 51 5
MIDWAY STUDIOS AUSTIN
A pedestrian shooter that needed more time in the lab.

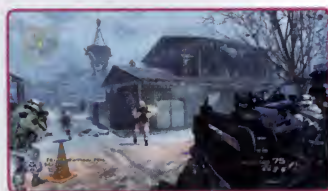


BORDERLANDS 9
DEVELOPER: GEARBOX SOFTWARE
PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4
"Borderlands starts out great and only gets better. It takes the best elements from RPGs and fuses them to a superb shooter. The result is quite simply the most rewarding co-op to date. The fact it's being supported by so much extra DLC, even this long after release, means it's great value for money too."

RECOMMENDED Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway 8
GEARBOX SOFTWARE
The most authentic WWII shooter ever made.

Call of Duty 3 7
TREYARCH
Solid but surprisingly unspectacular.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare 10
INFINITY WARD
Relentlessly exciting. You'd have to be mental to miss this.



MODERN WARFARE 2 10
DEVELOPER: INFINITY WARD
PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION PLAYERS: 1-18
"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Supremely crafted, *Modern Warfare 2* is, with its older brother, a high-watermark for this generation of shooters."

RECOMMENDED Call of Duty: Black Ops 9
TREYARCH
A generous package with great solo and online play. The presentation's excellent too.

ESSENTIAL Call of Duty: World at War 10
TREYARCH
A class act. War at its worst (and best). Proof you can make a great WWII game set (partially) in the Pacific. Plus, Nazi Zombies.

Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 7
TECHLAND
A cinematic and action-packed Western shooter.

RECOMMENDED The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena 8
STARBREEZE STUDIOS / TIGON STUDIOS
Moody and fresh. A must play. You don't need to know the movies to enjoy it either.

Condemned 2: Bloodshot 9
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
Gripping stuff. We were blown away. Shame the original isn't on PS3.

RECOMMENDED The Darkness 9
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
Stunning, original and gory as hell. Cross your fingers for a sequel because this rocks.

All together now

BioShock: modern classic, so-so port from Another Console, and hideously late. Irrational Games didn't do the sequel, but it is coding *BioShock Infinite* and promises to make all versions of the game at the same time, thus pleasing everyone at the same time. No inferior ports this time.



F.E.A.R. 8
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS / DAY 1 STUDIOS
A chilling ride, but the graphics could've been sharper.

F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin 7
MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
An above-average shooter suffering from a lack of imagination.

RECOMMENDED Far Cry 2 8
UBISOFT MONTREAL
A technical open-world bell-ringer but the travel time will grate.

Haze 6
FREE RADICAL DESIGN
Patchy visuals, tragic level design and dismal AI.

ESSENTIAL Killzone 2 10
GUERRILLA GAMES
Lives up to the hype. Amazing graphics, hectic action.

Legendary 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
A rushed mess. Terrible.

RECOMMENDED MAG 9
ZIPPER INTERACTIVE
Shooter junkies take heed: this is where it's at for online combat.

RECOMMENDED Medal of Honor 8
DANGER CLOSE / DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
Not sexy but it's a gritty, realistic shooter with great atmosphere.

Medal of Honor: Airborne 6
EA LOS ANGELES
Short and lacks innovation. Too many problems.

RECOMMENDED Mirror's Edge 8
EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE
A true original that makes some grand leaps in design.

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising 8
CODEMASTERS
Authentic but niche. Very unforgiving.

RECOMMENDED The Orange Box 9
EA UK / VALVE CORPORATION
Portal is worth virtually any asking price alone. The rest of what's here, including the critically-acclaimed *Half-Life 2*, is a bonus.

Quantum of Solace 7
TREYARCH
Has too many faults to be compelling.

RECOMMENDED Resistance: Fall of Man 10
INSOMNIAC GAMES
A fantastic launch title with sweet weapons.

RECOMMENDED Resistance 2 9
INSOMNIAC GAMES
Fast, furious and stuffed with action.

Rogue Warrior 3
ZOMBIE STUDIOS / REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
A fiasco. We tried to like it but it's too short and too terrible.

Singularity 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE
Had potential but wasn't quite worth the wait.

Time Crisis 4 7
NEX ENTERTAINMENT
A little bipolar at times. Arcade mode's okay.

TimeShift 6
SABER INTERACTIVE
A solid attempt that doesn't quite reach 88 miles per hour.

RECOMMENDED Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 9
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Slick, good-looking and utterly engaging.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas 2 7
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Doesn't quite feel as good or as cool as the first one.

Turning Point: Fall of Liberty 4
SPARK UNLIMITED
Scrappy throughout. Great concept, bogus execution.

Turok 7
PROPAGANDA GAMES
Packs bite but it's missing a few teeth.

Unreal Tournament 3 8
EPIC GAMES
Fast, twitchy online multiplayer shooting. No spitscreen though.

Wolfenstein 7
RAVEN SOFTWARE / ID SOFTWARE
Lacks soul but delivers Nazi-blasting action.

SPORTS

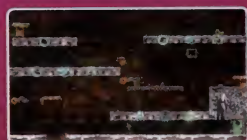
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa 7
EA CANADA
Blissful, *FIFA 10* football with a World Cup facelift. A bit pricey.

Ashes Cricket 2009 6
TRANSMISSION GAMES
Disappointing, but stick through the ugly for some multiplayer beauty.

Backbreaker 7
NATURALMOTION
Great tech. Worth a look to see euphoria at work in a sports game.



THE BEST PSN GAMES ON PlayStation®Store



BRAID
DEVELOPER: HOTHREAD
PLAYERS: 1
A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man.



PIXELJUNK SHOOTER
DEVELOPER: Q-GAMES
PLAYERS: 1-2
Take control of a tiny ship and navigate your way through various caverns, rescuing any survivors along the way. Of course, there's interesting gameplay mechanics thrown into the mix, such as fluid water and lava dynamics that need to be used to solve puzzles.



FLIGHT CONTROL HD
DEVELOPER: FIREMINT
PLAYERS: 1-4
Possibly the most addictive and accessible PSN title available. The premise is simply to guide the aircraft on-screen to their respective runways. That's it – but you'll be totally hooked. One of the best games to play with PlayStation Move too.



SHANK
DEVELOPER: KLEI ENTERTAINMENT
SAN DIEGO PLAYERS: 1-2
An ultra-violent 2D side-scroller inspired by the classic beat 'em ups of the '80s. Aesthetically it's a beautifully animated homage to the greatest graphic novels and golden-age comics. Stuffed with guns and machetes *Shank* is a cut above the rest.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
PLAYERS: 1-2
It's by no means 'straight' *Street Fighter* though nor should it be. Stuffed with 56 characters this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut you should have this already.

Role models



John Daly, star of *John Daly's ProStroke Golf*, is a bit like the golf version of Keith Richards. He admitted to the *Herald Sun*, "I did play better when I was drunk because I didn't think about it (golf) too much." He's often seen sucking on a cigarette before a round, and once smashed a fan's camera against a tree because the bloke was standing too close to him. Wow.

Beijing 2008 5
EUROCOM
Not the worst of its type but far from a game to buy and keep.

EA Sports MMA 7
EA SPORTS
Great controls but struggles to be convincing.



FIFA 11 9
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-22
"While the hundreds of matches ahead may eventually bring this titan back to Earth with another wish-list of changes for *FIFA 12*, at the moment *FIFA 11* remains a bafflingly brilliant update. If you've skipped the last few *FIFA* updates boost the score by one. Seriously, it's that good. Essential."

RECOMMENDED Fight Night Round 4 9
EA CANADA
Runs like a dream. Technical and strategic, plus it looks absolutely brilliant.

International Cricket 2010 7
TRICKSTAR GAMES
Not the most comprehensive cricket game but certainly the best when you're on the pitch.

John Daly's ProStroke Golf 5
GUSTO GAMES
Those looking for a high production value golf game should give this the shaft.

RECOMMENDED NBA 2K11 8
VISUAL CONCEPTS / KUSH GAMES
Hard court high priest Michael Jordan stars in perhaps the best basketball game ever.

NBA Street: Homecourt 8
EA CANADA
Brash, addictive arcade basketball.

Pro Evolution Soccer 2011 8
KONAMI
Good for a goal fix, still second best overall. Get *FIFA 11*.

Rugby League Live 5
BIG ANT
Not as complete a game as the last one on PS2 and the whack team ratings frustrate.

Shaun White Skateboarding 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Kudos for the quirky touches but the skating itself is pretty bland.

Shaun White Snowboarding 6
UBISOFT MONTREAL
Lacks the fine touch of realism or the excitement of lunacy.

RECOMMENDED Skate 9
EA BLACK BOX
A well-balanced masterpiece and true *Tony Hawk* killer. Trumped by its sequels.



SKATE 2 9
DEVELOPER: BLACK BOX
PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8
"Skate 2 is one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense and packed with natural lines and the balance is sublime."

RECOMMENDED Skate 3 8
EA BLACK BOX
Better in many ways, although the city isn't as cool as *Skate 2*.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 8
EA TIBURON
Still the only golf game worth owning.

Tony Hawk's Project 8 7
NEVERSOFT
No real reason to revisit this post-Skate at all.

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground 6
NEVERSOFT
Bloated and inconsistent. Pass.

Tony Hawk: RIDE 4
ROBOMODO
Pure frustration made plastic.

Top Spin 3 8
PAM DEVELOPMENT
Realistic tennis with a steep learning curve. Rewarding, but needs time to master.

RECOMMENDED UFC Undisputed 2010 8
YUKE'S
The new undisputed baron of sports fighting.

Vancouver 2010 6
EUROCOM
A handful of events that last one afternoon.

RECOMMENDED Virtua Tennis 2009 8
SUMO DIGITAL
The top seed of tennis made even better. Great four player fun.

STRATEGY

RECOMMENDED Civilization Revolution 8
FIRAXIS GAMES
Great fun and shockingly addictive.

RECOMMENDED R.U.S.E. 8
EUGEN SYSTEMS
Niche but supremely well-crafted strategy. Better with Move, too.

The Sims 3 7
THE SIMS STUDIO
Waiting to pounce on the right type of gamer.

Stormrise 4
THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
A cack-handed, future war mess.

Tom Clancy's EndWar 7
UBISOFT SHANGHAI
Far from a finished product. Works, but it's hardly an essential purchase.

infamous

REVISITING PLAYSTATION CLASSICS

1997:
FIGHTING FORCE

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION GENRE: ACTION DEVELOPER: CORE DESIGN
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ENGLAND CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$5 (EBAY)



Trends are cyclic. This statement applies to fashion, music, movies and videogames. Consider that even though technology evolves to make things bigger, better and more interactive we still cling onto old ideas and giving them a modern reinterpretation. Sometimes these old ideas are cleverly realised in this new environment, sometimes they aren't.

Fighting Force wasn't. Planned as *Streets of Rage 4*, this 3D interpretation of the classic 2D side-scrolling brawler was well into development when the deal went sour with Sega. Apparently Sonic's handlers wanted the game to be exclusive to the Sega Saturn, but Eidos wanted to actually make money and release it across multiple platforms. Sega yanked the name but Eidos ploughed on.

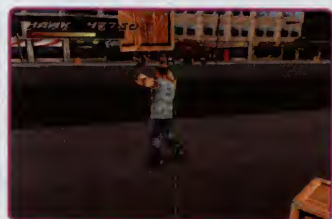
The gameplay was a classic formula: smash in a weird assortment of baddies, including suited goons, killer vamps, construction workers, roller-blading chicks, SAS types and even a few zombies. The story was tenuous, and gave a thin pretence as to why this motley crew was roped into being beaten to a pulp.

Battlegrounds included the city, parks, offices, and a submarine base, all ready to soak up the blood of the aforementioned odd squad while

you beat them down with objects lying on the ground. There was a smattering of heavy weapons too, including the obligatory shotgun, rocket launcher, and other ballistic weaponry.

Fighting Force focussed on melee fisticuffs, and it was here that it fell right on its backside due to repetitive combat against aggressive clones. The game was ambitious with an open 3D world incorporating interactive objects such as windows to smash through, car doors to reef off, tires to pick up – all used to rearrange a bad guys face. However, you were 'trapped' in a false arena until all the enemies had been defeated but it all seemed foreign and incongruous.

Fighting Force spawned a sequel, ditching the cooperative play thus relegating itself to gaming's ranks of 'also ran'. The world evolved into proper open worlds without silly restrictions. Plus, the game came out around the same time as another Eidos title, *Tomb Raider 2*. You know which one fared well and which one sank.



AVENUES OF ANGER

We suspect Eidos simply changed a few names of the protagonists after the deal with Sega went tits up, as the plot and general gameplay setup still screams *Streets of Rage*. There was some tripe about a nutbag, Dr. Zeng, who was convinced the world was going to end on the eve of the year 2000. Turns out it didn't, so the Doc decides to trigger his own apocalypse. Enter three dutiful 20-somethings and one 17-year-old, each with their own set of skills and typical attributes, differing in strength and physical characteristics. There's the slow but heavy hitter, a fast but weak fighter, and two all-rounders. One of them, Hank Manson and his bad moustache, was the sole character in the woeful sequel.

Next month



DUKE NUKEM FOREVER

*The resurrection of gaming royalty
- only in next month's issue!*

PLUS

Killzone 3 • Mass Effect 2 • Dead Space 2
Test Drive Unlimited 2 • Homefront • Marvel
vs. Capcom 3 • Bulletstorm and more!

ON SALE FEBRUARY 9

The *only* PS3 mag with 100% Australian content!

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia

Disclaimer: OPS will do everything to deliver this content next month but we can't be held at fault if things go awry or scheduled games slip and miss our deadline!



CYBER HEALTH WARNING!

If you've been online or on your mobile, there's a high chance you've been infected by The Bullies Virus.

Get a free health check at **CURE THE BULLIES.COM.AU**



Vodafone
Foundation



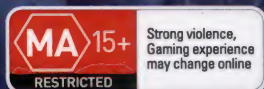
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WHERE PLAYERS CAN HACK INTO A HOST GAME AS
AN ALLY OR ENEMY AND THEN HACK INTO SOLDIERS,
CIVILIANS, MECHANICAL BIONIC CREATURES AND WEAPONRY!



ON SALE 10.02.2011



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